FEMALE CHARACTERS IN JANE AUSTEN'S NOVELS

THESIS SUBMITTED FOR
AWARD OF THE DEGREE OF
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

BY

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UNDER THE SUPERVISION OF

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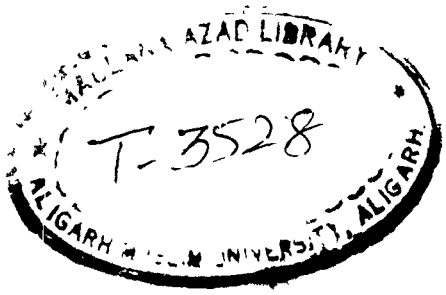

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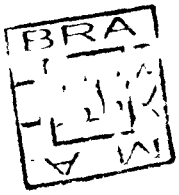

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This is to Certify that Mrs.Nazira Mahmood a Ph.D student has worked under my supervision,and that her thesis entitled " FEMALE CHARACHTERS IN JANE AUSTEN'S NOVELS" is, in my openion, suitable for submission.

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December 1986.

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Nazira Mahmood
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I N T R O D U C T I O N

Jane Austen has presented a glittering gallery of females in her novels. They are striking in their subtle variety and appear as real as any woman of late twentieth century. They have their own whims, prejudices, and virtues which ensure them a solid and lasting relevance.

Jane Austen, whom F.R.Leavis regarded as the inaugurator of the great tradition of English novel, was a born story teller, and revelled in this art from early years. Virginia Woolf commenting on her early inclination to novel writing remarks:

> One of those fairies which perch upon cradle must have taken her a flight through the world directly she was born. When she was laid in the cradle again she knew not only what the world looked like, but had already chosen her kingdom.[1]

She occupies a peculiar position in the history of English fiction. She does not accommodate herself to the facile generalisations which are made about her contemporaries. Wordsworth and Colridge are called Romantic, they were both born within five years of

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1. Virginia Woolf, Common Reader, Hogarth Press, London, 1932, p.171

Jane Austen. But she is too little a writer of the nineteenth century to be called Romantic and despite a strong sense of objectivity and realism, she is not exactly a classicist. Working with materials extremely limited in themselves, she develops themes of the broadest significance. Her chief interest lies in human motive and the reactions of individuals to each other. The small area of experience allowed her a closer analysis of recurring situations and types, she could deal with them with absolute accuracy by never stepping beyond the limits of her personal knowledge. She confines herself chiefly to the middling classes of society, her most distinguished characters do not rise greatly above well-bred gentlemen and ladies.

Humbly and daily, she collected the twigs and straws out of which the nest was to be made and placed them neatly together. The twigs and straws may, to some, appear a little dry and a little dusty. There usually is a small country town, a country house a tea party, a dinner party and an occasional picnic, a narrow social setting-with three of or four families on visiting terms. Life is mostly surrounded by these connections and occupations. The Families generally have no financial problems, their life is more or less sedate and conventional. Vice

adventure, passion as Virginia Woolf remarks, are left outside.

Jane Austen always 'stuck to' Bath, Lyme Regis, - the places she knew and the people she knew to inhabit them. And she seldom tried to show them through a view point other than her own. She does not present a man, without the presence of a woman. What they got up to out of the drawing room and female society, we don't know. We learn of their behaviour with the less virtuous of the society only by hearsay. We never see gentleman, hunting, shaving, playing billiards, attending to business. No doubt, these were fields beyond her experience, nor really necessary for the communication of her vision of human character.

Her limited range was further bounded by the limitations imposed by circumstances. She lived in an age when women were forbidden by convention from moving in any society except that in which they were born. The class, in which our novelist was born, the smaller English gentry, was burdened with the conventions. All her stories take place in England. Not only was she aware of the limitations of her experience, she refused to be tempted beyond them. Her advice to her niece Anna

who had also taken me to novel writing, was to prevent her moving with certain characters out of England.

> And we think you had better not leave England. Let the Portmans go to Ireland, but as you know nothing of the manners there, you had better not go with them. You will be in danger of giving false representations. Stick to Bath & the Foresters.[1] There you will be quite at home.

Jane Austen was gifted with one essential gift of the novelist, the power to create living characters. Of course, her emphasis was on projecting female characters. The aim of this study is to analyse some of the women in Jane Austen's novels in some detail.

Jane Austen has presented some women who are intelligent, sensible, and keen observers of their surroundings. Being players themselves, these anxious spectators do not see the whole of the game, but they see more than the other players. Elinor Dashwood in Sense and Sensibility is the first character of this genre. She is much like the sensible but reserved Cassandra, the elder sister of Jane Austen. She looks at the weaknesses

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1. Leigh Austen, James Edward, Memoir of Jane Austen, Oxford University Press, London, 1926, p.81

and errors of her fellow beings with regretful forbearance, and with a tender solicitude for those who are her nearest and dearest. Elizabeth Bennet, in the next novel Pride and Prejudice bears the closest likeness in character of Jane Austen herself. Jane Austen comments about Elizabeth Bennet:

> I must confess, that I think her as delightful a creature as ever appeared in print, and how I shall be able to tolerate those who do not like her at least I do not know.[1]

Fanny Price too is a sensible creature; but does not have the energy, brilliance and wit of Elizabeth. She is like Elinor Dashwood in being always right in her actions and judgments, but she lacks Elinor's decisiveness and occasional irony. In Anne, Elliot, ~~Chapman~~ Jane Austen lays bare more of her heart and lets out more of her inmost thoughts than she permitted herself elsewhere, even in the characters she loved best.

The second Chapter deals with a group of characters, who , though prudent, commit some blunders due to misconceptions. Emma Woodhouse is

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1. Austen Leigh James Edward, op.cit., p.85

the first example, she is blind to the truth of her own and others situations. She acts often without principle or on wrong principle. Though with mental powers not inferior to Elizabeth Bennet's, she has to be schooled through an arduous course of blunders and humiliations, due to misperception of what is passing on under her eyes. Only after many reverses and some bitter pangs does she attain perfection. Catherine Morland is also subject to some illusions. She is another neophyte, bewildered by her first experiences. She is taught sense by a series of misadventures and disillusionments.

Even when Jane Austen is not out primarily to make us laugh, she never wholly leaves the realm of comedy. Her tales are not laughter provoking but they leave a rippling sense of pleasure behind them. Her humour is quiet, delicate, ironical. She is not a satirist, for satire connotes moral- purpose. Jane Austen never criticises bitterly, she faintly arches her eyebrows and passes on.

However, there is a distinction among her fools. Some of them are quite innocent, and completely differ from the mean and vulgar fools. Miss Bates, the well intentioned, natural fool presents a striking contrast to the boastful Mrs. Elton.

There is no touch of pettiness, nor any hint of spite in Miss Bates' character. A certain beauty illumines these fools.

Jane Austen has not presented only innocent fools, there are certainly some foolish characters who can be termed as mean. They make us laugh with their whims and indolent persistence in error. ' Follies and nonsense, whims and inconsistencies' diverted Elizabeth Bennet, and the same may be said of Jane Austen. Jane Austen was not a pedagogic novelist like Maria Edgeworth; she did not make it her business to preach a doctórine or put emphasis on some moral aspects by devising a conclusive claim of events. She saw herself, rather, as a critical observer, and adopted the comic view as the most illuminating as well as the one that appealed to her humour. Irony is the soul of her comedy. She does not treat life as predominantly tragic. The comedy of the human situation had a greater fascination for her and it is this characteristic of seeing the inconsistencies and incongruity between a person's pretensions and his abilities, between his words and his actions, that makes her primarily a comic writer. ~~The fourth~~

The fourth Chapter aims at studying the petty minded, vain and pompous female characters who are basically foolish. In Jane Austen folly and vanity often go hand in hand.

The basis of Jane Austen's morality is self-knowledge; this is the keytone of her beliefs- the knowledge of ourselves and our duty' as Edmund puts it in Mansfield Park. Jane Austen believed that passions should never dominate reason. One can never be happy by catering to one's passions. Lydia Bennets satisfies her physical passions, but her pleasure is not ever lasting. She has to suffer and repent.

Mansfield Park reveals Jane Austen's moral preoccupations most clearly. Maria and Julia Bertram, being a bad name to their family, just because of their inappropriate education and training. Jane Austen gave supreme importance to moral principles in the education of children.

Nearly all of Jane Austen's readers- adrirers and detractors alike- see in her choice of subject matter a deliberate limitation, a smallness of range. But a close study reveals her scope as quite adequate to the exposition of the important

themes which interested her. Every character brings to light a certain aspect of the human personality. We find all these characters as real as the people who surround us.

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CHAPTER I

Models of Propriety

Jane Austen emphasises on intelligence and restraint as cardinal virtues in human life. She considers life as a mixture of formal and self education. Some of her heroines react instinctively against everything that is bad or false, and ensure happy and worthy lives for themselves.

Elinor Dashwood, the eldest daughter of Mrs. John Dashwood, in Sense and Sensibility, has a strong understanding, cool judgement and an amiable temper with strong feeling which she knows how to govern. Her character is carefully drawn by the author. She resembles Anne in gentle disposition, upright principles, constancy of feeling, and patient endurance of suffering. She represents the effects of discreet good sense on the conduct of a person's life.

The two sisters Elinor and Marianne are similarly circumstanced in point of education and accomplishments, exposed to similar traits, but Elinor by a sober exertion of prudence and judgement sustains herself with fortitude and overcomes her difficulties with success. Jane Austen writes how Elinor had

> a strength of understanding, and coolness of judgement, which qualified her, though only nineteen, to be the counsellor or her mother, and enabled her frequently to counteract, to the advantages of them all, that eagerness of mind in Mrs. Dashwood which must generally have led to imprudence.

Edward Ferras is Elinor's own choice, and in consonance with her coolness of disposition, her friendship with Edward is conducted on the level of the mind, as against the behaviour of Marianne with Willoughby. Elinor often assures her dubious sister that Edward is an intelligent and upright youg man, that his mind is well informed, his enjoyment of books exceedingly great, his imagination lively, his observation just and correct, and his taste delicate and pure.

Sense and Sensibility, ~~p.6~~ Oxford University Press, London, 1975, p.6

Marianne is baffled by the unruffled composure of Elinor while leaving her home at Norland and her lover Edward. She says:

> "... Elinor in quiting Norland and Edward, *cried not as I did. Even now her self* command is invariable. When is she dejected or melancholy? When does she try to avoid society, or appear restless and dissatisfied in it ? "

Edward's visit to Barton(the place where Elinor has shifted with her family ~~has shifted~~) is mild and unexciting. There is a noticeable lack of warmth and affection towards Elinor, and he seems confused and vexed. His departure is also just as featureless as his visit. Elinor's behaviour is, however, outwardly just the opposite of Marianne's in a similar situation. Marianne is unable to endure the separation from Willoughby when he leaves Barton Park. She is so much worked up emotionally that the whole family feels concerned about her. Elinor is

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Sense and Sensibility, p.44

also touched by the lack of warmth in Edward's behaviour. His coldness and reserve mortified her severely. She, however, maintains perfect calm and never exposes herself. She knows Edward's nature as well as her limitations and thinks of him with mixed feeling of tenderness, pity, approbation, censure, and doubt. She knows that reason in a young girl, is an eseentially amiable quality.

She has the capacity of bearing the tense situation with calm and fortitude, and smiles in the face of disillusion and the bitterness of disappointed love. Reserve and self respect are her armours against the scurvy tricks of a rival, or the caprice of destiny. When Lucy Steele convinces Elinor that Edward has been engaged to her for four years, Elinor is overcome by ' an emotion and distress beyond anything she had ever felt before. She is mortified, shocked, confunded.'

Elinor has to endure this heartbreak news by herself. She feels sure that Edward loves her but is a prisoner in possessive hands. She keeps Lucy's secret well guarded and remains calm and cheerful. Containing the lonely pain to herself, she feels supported by the feeling that she is doing her duty which she owes to her family and her friends, and even

to her enemy.

The irony of the circumstances is that the hardened task of consoling Marianne in her distresses falls upon Elinor, whose dejection in love is more profound in scope, and longer in duration. She tries to console Marianne but the latter remains inconsolable:

> ' Oh how easy for those who have no sorrow of their own to talk of exertion Happy, happy Elinor, you cannot have an idea of what I suffer.'[1]

She has to undergo further trials when Lucy's sister discloses Lucy's engagement with Edward, and an angry Mrs. Ferras disinherits Edward in favour of his younger brother Robert. Colonel Brandon unwittingly turns the knife in Elinor's heart by asking her to perform the embarrassing task of telling Edward that he may have a living in Colonel's dwellings. Discussing the nobility of Elinor's character, C.Linklater Thomson remarks:

> Elinor no doubt embodies Jane Austen's youthful conception of a perfect woman, and should be interesting merely on that account.

1- Sense and Sensibility, p.56

> We cannot deny that the ideal is a high one. Elinor bears acute anxiety without losing her temper, her neglecting others, she maintains her dignity in the face of attacks from her unworthy rival, she nurses and comforts her sister, and never loses her self control.[1]

Elinor with her prudent intelligence appears like the elder sister of her mother in all important matters. After their father's demise, she always thinks that it would be more prudent for them to settle at some distance from Norland, so that they may be away from their present acquaintances.

W.A.Craik pin points an important feature of her character by remarking:

> Elinor is, in fact, an attractive heroine, both as seen in her opinions on herself and others, and when in her conversation. Her opinions discipline the events. She gives the rational view of them which the

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1- Thompson C.Linklater, Jane Austen, Horace Marshall & sons, London, p.81

reader should share.[1]

When Mrs. Henry Dashwood is looking for a suitable accommodation, she depends upon Elinor's judgement whose steadier judgement rejects several houses as too large for their income, which her mother would have approved.

The ungracious task of repressing sensibility is thrown upon her, and the necessity of contrast with the impulsiveness or her mother and sister makes her often look like a monitoral character. Elinor shares the late eighteenth century taste for nature as her conversation with her silly step-brother about her sillier sister-in-law's improvement at Norland, shows:

> ' Where is the green house to be?' says Elinor
> ' Upon the knoll behind the house. The old walnut trees are all come down to make room for it. It will be a very fine object from many parts of the park, and the flower garden will slope down just before it, and be exceedingly pretty. We have cleared awa all the old thorns that grew in patches over the brow.[2]

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1 - Cornish F.Warre, Jane Austen, Machmillan & Co.London, 1929, p.40

2 - Sense and Sensibility, p.62

Elinor keeps her anxiety and censure to herself; and is very thankful that Marianne is not present to share the provocation. Unlike Marianne, she does not want to establish a harmony of understanding and unity of man and nature. When Marianne exclaims her grief about dead leaves, she replies ' it is not everyone... who has your passion for dead leaves.''

Elinor's calculated reserve and calm, however, often make her appear uninteresting, didactic, and priggish. She is intensely interested in social conventions, indulging often in hypocrisies that hide her feelings from others. She wishes to satisfy the demands of society, as well as of the self. She tries to incorporate into her conception of the world all of the trivial, contradictory, anomalous, and unpleasant as well as the important harmonious, and pleasant aspects of her life, giving each its due weight. Her attempt is to understand the world. She does not want to change it. Her understanding is not much of an active forc it is inhabited by her respect for social conventions. She is a lonely figure; all have confidence in her, but she has not confidante. In the whole novel she hinges on her promise not to reveal Lucy's secret engagement. She puts herself in trouble with the vow. Robert Garis analyses this dilemma of Elinor when he remarks:

This perverse invention is a mild version of the

> kind of outrageous act with which the healthy part of a sick mind signals to the outside world that it needs and wants help. Here it is Jane Austen's good sense that is crying for help. There is no rational reason whatsoever for Elinor's having contracted in the first place to keep from her beloved sister and mother secret which she never asked to be told. She ought simply to have refused. [1]

Elinor observes arbitrary conventions in each situation. She has long understood Lucy's calculations and Edward's misery, nevertheless, she 'glories' in Edward's integrity in maintaining the engagement. Even in situations of much less importance, she believes in this doctrine of behaviour. She pays a formally required visit to Mrs. John Dashwood, although their dislike is mutual. Everelt Zimmerman asserts that

> Elinor continues to the pattern of deceit that she tries to comprehend.... Much of her energy is devoted to solving puzzles

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[1] Garris Robert' Learning Experience and Change',Jane Austen, edit.B.C.Southam, pp 64.65

> that she herself has helped to make. This actively is sterile and ultimately solipsistic.[1]

Elinor appears comparatively unfeeling. The only emotional scenes she has are those where she has to suppress her feelings such as the talks with Lucy, and her interview with Willoughby. Willoughby's confession that he really loves Marianne, softens Elinor's attitude and she wishes Mrs. Willoughby dead and Mr.Willoughby married to Marianne. Marvin Mudrick who analyses these feelings of Elinor criticises her thus:

> Not only does irony fail here for the moment, but the conscience of the novel, the formal conscience of the rural society, becomes embarrassingly transparent, and through the flagrant inconsistency of her heroine Jane Austen is herself revealed in a posture of yearning for the impossible and lost, the passionate and beautiful hero,

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1- Zimmerman Everett ' Sense and Sensibility' Jane Austen edit. John Halperin, 1977, p.120

the absolute lover.[1]

It was in all probability far from Jane Austen's intention to present Elinor as a less attractive character than the romantic Marianne, but she, sometimes, appears too didactic, too ready to preach her mother and to patronise her sister. She is in the Richardsonion tradition of perfect propriety. A girl of nineteen who never makes a mistake is however, too extraordinary to be quite lifelike.

Elizabeth Bennet in Pride and Prejudice resembles Elinor in her intellectual make up, and in her rational views. She differs from her in her observation and discernment of personalities. Her family conditions also are different from those of Elinor. Though as affectionate and kind to her sister Jane, as is Elinor to Marianne, she need not console and nurse her sister's fastidious feelings when Jane's lover rejects her.

Elizabeth is undoubtedly a girl with a sensible nature and personality which distinguishes her from all her sisters. Jane Austen liked Elizabeth

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1- Mudrick Marvin, Irony as Defehce and Discovery, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1958, p.85

the best of all her heroines. In a letter to her sister Cassandra she writes:

> I must confess that I think her as delightful a creature as ever appeared in print. 1

Her gaiety, high spirit and courage, wit and readiness, as well as her good sense and right feeling are set off and made individual and delightful by her honour. She is as much alive as Clarissa or Shirley or Bathsheba Everdene or Clare Middleton.

Elizabeth has a quick perception of what is ridiculous and mean. She possesses a courageous nature, a ready tongue, and is a creature more of intellect than of emotion. In all her words and actions, she is far more balanced than all her sisters or her mother of whose frivolity and pettiness she is often ashamed. She forms the correct impressions of the superfluous character of Mr. Collins from his first letter and comprehends the merits and deficiencies of the Bingleys. She can easily observe the amusing and proud nature of Lady Catherine.

1- Chapman R.W, 'Letters of Jane Austen to her sister Cassandra and others', edit. Oxford Press, London, 1932, p.297

In her very first meeting with Collins she realises him to be a pompous and low witted person. He is a distant cousin of Mr. Bennet's, and the next heir to the Longbourn estate, entailed upon him after Mr. Bennet's death. This does not make him feel uneasy, on the contrary he intends to make amends by marrying one of the daughters of Mr. Bennet. When Mrs.Bennet informs him that Jane is already nearly engaged to Bingley, he promptly transfers his attention from her to Elizabeth, and proposes to marry her. Elizabeth's reply depicts her rational bent of mind:

> " I am very sensible of the honour of your proposals, but it is impossible for me to do otherwise than decline them... Do not consider me now as an elegant female intending to plague you, but as a rational creature speaking the truth from her heart."

Elizabeth is also a true observer of a situation, and is betowed with more quickness and keenness of discernment and less flexibility of temper. She cannot resist the temptation to say outright what she thinks as immoral or improper.

Pride and Prejudice, Oxford University Press,London, 1975, p.97

She never likes the frequent visit of her younger sisters to Meryton, and warns her parents about the consequences. When Lydia receives an invitation from Mrs.Forester to accompany her to Brighton, Elizabeth attempts to restrain her from going She considers this invitation as the 'death warrant' of all possibility of decency and common sense. She is unable to restrain herself from secretly advising her father to restrain Lydia from such an unwise step. She impresses upon him all the improprieties of Lydia's general behaviour, and the disadvantage of such a company as Mrs. Forester's. She warns him that if he does not curb Lydia's silly enthusiasm as revealed in her proposed visit, he will soon find her beyond the reach of amendment.

Elizabeth sets herself up as an ironic observer, able and prepared to judge and classify the people into two categories: the simple ones, and the intricate ones. The latter being those who cannot be judged and classified so easily, and are the most amusing to the ironic observer because they offer the most formidable challenge to his powers of detection and analysis. Elizabeth always contentrates her attention and interest on these complex characters. Her choice generally falls on persons who

have intellect and are capable of free choice. But her tender age and limited experience of life sometimes fails her in facing complex situations and understanding intricate characters. She can tag and dismiss the blatantly simple persons very well, but when she turns away from these to ambiguous persons who can interest and engage her attention, her youth and inexperience and emotional partiality begin to deceive her. She is deceived first in her understanding of Charlotte Lucas' situation. Charlotte is a sensible and intelligent young lady. She shares Elizabeth's good taste for raillery and social generalisation. But Charlotte has her altogether cynical views on courtship and marriage, which make Elizabeth refuse to take her at her word. Charlotte believes that happiness in marriage depends entirely on chance. If the partners know each other before marriage, or their dispositions are similar, it does not make much difference. They actually continue to grow all the time, and it is better to know as little as possible of the defects of the persons with whom one marries.

Elizabeth laughs at her friend and declares that her verdict is not sound. She is, therefore, shocked when she learns that Charlotte has accepted the hand of Mr. Collins. It is not that Elizabeth

misjudges Charlotte's capabilities, but that she underestimates the pressures acting upon her. Charlotte is twentyseven, unmarried and not pretty. She lives in a society which treats a poor old maid as an irritable burden upon it. Elizabeth is thus blind to the practical problems of her friend. She estimates her only as a distinct individual, and feels that owing to the incompatibility of Charlotte's and Collin's individual nature there could be no pressures which would permit such an unnatural alliance. The shock of Charlotte's marriage to a pretentious and thoughtless man like Collins makes Elizabeth recognise that these pressures act decisively upon other free individuals also, as they have perhaps done in the case of her father. Even Mr. Bennet, a sensible man, had married a vain frivolous lady like Mrs. Bennet. The incompatibility in their temperaments and mental make up deprived them of all possibility of proper communication at the intellectual level. Elizabeth recognises that having made his choice long ago, her father is left with no alternative but to bear up with his situation stoically.

She has learnt from his example that a person may yield to external pressures of physical passions or economic stringencies which may compel

him to abdicate his free choice, and land him in a situation of self degradation and defeat. It is, however, the social facade of the complex persons that deceives Elizabeth; while she can penetrate through her father's out of sympathetic familiarity and concern, yet Charlotte's eludes her.

Elizabeth is again misled in the case of Wickham when she is charmed by him in her first meeting with him. Wickham is clever, charming, and a smart person. Her deep rooted prejudice against Darcy arouses sympathy for him, who, she thinks has been wronged by Darcy. She is so much overpowered by her sympathy for Wickham that she even begins to imagine herself to be in love with him. But her first impressions of Wickham soon fade away when he transfers his attentions to a rich and young Miss King. She confesses to her aunt Mrs.Gardiner that she was not much in love because she never experienced that ' pure and elevating passion'.

Elizabeth considers love as the harbringer of happiness throughout one's life. Being sensible, she knows that the love which has a good chance of lasting must be based on something other than the keen or momentary sympathy roused by the physical

beauty or pitiable condition of a person.

Elizabeth's first meeting with Darcy is not very cordial. She is offended by his being too proud to dance with her at the country hall. He whispers to his friend Bingley:

> " In such an assembly as this, it would be insupportable. Your sisters are engaged, and there is not another woman in the room whom it would not be a punishment to me to stand up with."[1]

She overhears herself pronounced by him to be " tolerable but no handsome enough to tempt me."[2] Elizabeth feels insulted, and with this they do not remain on cordial terms. She determines to aggravate his dislike of her. It is this determination that makes her talk to Darcy sarcastically. When Jane Bennet falls ill at Netherfield, and Elizabeth goes to nurse her, she is thrown into Darcy's company again. She now makes her extraordinary and attractive personality felt so strongly that Mrs.Hurst and Miss Bingley take an immediate dislike to her. Darcy is, however, so bewitched by her as he had never been by any woman before.

He does to the extent of declaring:

> " Were it not for the inferiority of her connection he should be in some danger." 3

1.Pride and Prejudice p.8
2.Ibid p.12
3.Ibid p.50

With the insult of the ball fresh in her mind, Elizabeth does not show much interest in Darcy. During their dance at Netherfield, she questions him about Wickham, but he keeps silent. It is an artful irony of Jane Austen's that Miss Bingley immediately after their dance tells her that Wickham is entirely wrong, and Darcy is in the right in the breach between the two men. Elizabeth disbelieves her for two reasons: in the first place because she has correctly sized Miss Bingley up as an entirely unreliable source of information, and secondly because she wants to dislike Darcy in order to avoid any entanglement which may cost her her freedom.

Though her anger against Darcy persists, she is drawn towards him gradually. While dancing with Darcy once she remarks about the similarity of their nature:

> " I have always seen a great similarity in the turn of our minds. We are each of an unsocial, taciturn disposition, unwilling to speak, unless we expect to say something that will amaze the whole room, and be lauded down to posterity with all the eclat or a proverb.[1]

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1. Pride and Prejudice, p.82

The relationship of Darcy and Elizabeth is resumed at Hunsford, the personage to which William Collins has taken his ~~new~~ wife, and where she goes to pay a visit to them. The visit to Hunsford brings Elizabeth into contact with Lady Catherine D.Borough, the aunt of Darcy. The subject of chief interest at the Parsonage is the expected arrival of Darcy and his cousin Colonel Fitzwilliam. After their arrival at Rosings, they often visit the Collins. Elizabeth does not fail to notice that she herself is a centre of interest for Darcy's frequent visits. Her prejudice and anger, however, increase when she learns from Colonel Fitzwilliam that Darcy has a strong influence over his friend Bingley, and that he has saved his friend from an 'imprudent marriage'.

Elizabeth now starts suspecting Darcy's complicity in separating Jane from Bingley. Immediately after this harsh revelation, Darcy offers his hand to Elizabeth. She is bowled over this proposal and refuses

Darcy has not conceived that Elizabeth's feelings may be outraged by the contempt and scorn with which he has spoken of her relations. He has also not thought that by separating Bingley from Jane, he has inflicted a deep wound on her. While

declining his proposal, Elizabeth accuses him of the unjust and ungenerous part he has played towards her sister Jane. She also indicts him for his cruelty to Wickham in depriving him ' the best years of his life of that independence which was no less his due tha his desert.'[1]

Darcy's letter, clarifying his position in the charges levelled against him, marks the beginning of the change in Elizabeth's attitude towards him. She reads the letter with great astonishment and feels embarrassed about her outright condemnation of Darcy.

Being deeply prejudiced against Darcy, her first instinct is, however, to disbelieve him. But then in reflecting on Wickham's behaviour at Meryton, she is inclined to think it very probable that Darcy is telling the truth after all.

In these dramatic moments of self revelation, she has the honesty to think that there may be some truth in what Darcy has said about Jane.

The letter goes a long way in clearing many of the cobwebs which had clouded her vision earlier. Indignation against herself takes the place of indignation against Darcy. She realises that there is

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1. Pride and Prejudice p.63

much truth in Darcy's views about her family. She does not see Darcy again until the unexpected encounter at Pemberley, where she has gone with the Gardiners on vacation. Darcy's unexpected and early arrival confuses her as well as gives her an opportunity to know more about him. She is very much impressed by the cordial behaviour of Darcy towards herself, and her relations. Even before his arrival, the revelations made by his house keeper Mrs. Reynolds, who has known him since he was four years old, had removed whatever doubts lurked in her mind against Darcy.

This promising course of events paving a way for better understanding and intimacy between Elizabeth and Darcy is, however, suddenly interrupted by the startling news of the elopement of Lydia Bennet with Wickham.

Elizabeth has little leisure to reflect on her own feelings for several weeks. Musing afterwards on her feelings, she realises that Darcy alone would have been the most suitable match for her. But she knows it is futile to expect anything now that Lydia has disgraced her family. It, however, comes as a surprise to her, when she discovers that it is Darcy who has been mainly instrumental in arranging the

marriage of Lydia and Wickham. She still cannot believe that he would ever consent to be the brother-in-law of Wickham, even for her.

Nevertheless she refuses with keen disdain to promise Lady Catherine, who has come to Longbourn, to dissociate herself from Darcy. Her interview with Lady Catherine reveals her sensible courageous and frank temperament. Though Lady Catherine is very insolent and pert, Elizabeth without being brow-beaten replies to her befittingly:

> " In marrying your nephew, I should not consider myself as quitting that sphere. He is a gentleman, I am gentleman's daughter, so far we are equal."[1]

Mrs.Gardiner comes into the category of sensible characters in the sense that her main lineament is to be the guide of the heroine. She is the elegant amiable sister in law of Mrs. Bennet in Pride and Prejudice and is Elizabeth's spiritual mentor. She is several years younger to Mrs.Bennet, and is a great favourite with all her Longbourn nieces. It is Mrs.Gardiner who cautions Elizabeth against the imprudence of developing an attachment with a penniless man like Wickham. She has been suspicious of Wickham from the start. Elizabeth

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1. Pride and Prejudice, p.316

promises to act according to her advice. She as well as her husband carry Elizabeth forward towards her final happiness, in uniting her with Darcy.

Elizabeth proceeds on the tour in the company of her uncle and aunt. The route they choose leads them to Pemberley. Speaking more like an allagorical guide to a Bower of Bliss than an aunt, she asks Elizabeth:

> 'My love should not you like to see a place of which you have heard so much'[1]

The tour of the rooms at Pemberley with the housekeeper has much of quiet ironic drama, since Mrs.Gardiner believes Elizabeth has some attachment to Wickham and complete antipathy to Darcy. She asks smilingly how Elizabeth likes what she sees. Facts have begun to penetrate through Elizabeth's illusions. She is learning to see the true character of Darcy. Mrs. Gardiner removes her self satisfied illusions. Actually both husband and wife have an unusual part in bringing Elizabeth and Darcy together not only at Pemberley, but later at Longbourn, after Mrs. Gardinerwas helped by Darcy in the settlement of Lydia's marriage. Mrs. Gardiner's letter, for instance,

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1. Pride and Prejudice, p.81

reveals certain noble aspects of his character that he could never reveal himself. She writes:

> " His behaviour to us has, in every respect, been as pleasing as when we were in Derbyshire. His understanding and opinions all please me,..."[1]

She tells her that he desires nothing but a little more liveliness, and that, if he marries prudently his wife may teach him that.

This is indeed the imprimatur he needs before Jane Austen would marry him to Elizabeth, and is similar to Colonel Brandon's giving Edward a living. Even the last sentance of the novel is devoted to Elizabeth's gratitude towards these two who had been the means of uniting her with Darcy.

Mrs. Gardiner is more sensible and to the point than Elizabeth in the sense that inspite of the errors Elizabeth has now acknowledged, she still holds herself well above the rest of the world; while Mrs. Gardiner does not. To bring Elizabeth back down into their world is their main function in the novel. Elizabeth still considers her family as ungracious and vain. She does not quite see yet she is a part of her family. She unreservedly justifies Darcy's objections against her family. On

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1. Pride and Prejudice, p.288

the contrary Mrs. Gardiner, though herself as polite and prudent as her niece, manages to belong to the family without mortification. This is not true of every one. When Sir William Lucas becomes prosperous, he begins to feel a disgust for his business. The Bingle sisters would like to forget that their family fortune comes from trade. But Mrs. Gardiner is not ashamed that her husband lives by trade and within a view of his own warehouses. She has intelligence, taste, and good manners without any self concious detachment from people who do not have these qualities. She is to the point, far sighted and prudent in her judgments. When she comes to know about the break of Jane and Bingley affair she consoles Elizabeth by saying that these incidents are very common. A young man like Mr.Bingley, falls a prey to the charm of a beautiful girl very easily and when accidents separate the two, he forgets her very quickly. On Elizabeth's assurance about his (Bingley's) violent love, she comments:

> ' But that expression of violently in love is so hackneyed, so doubtful, so indefinite, that it gives me very little idea. It is as often applied to feelings which arise only from an half hour's acquaintance, as to a real, strong attachment'.1

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1. Pride and Prejudice, p.300

Actually it is these relatives of Elizabeth's who introduce her to 'nature' in a wider sense- the human nature that Elizabeth still archly holds herself above.

Charlotte Lucas, the friend of Elizabeth Bennet, is an intelligent woman of twenty seven. She finds a place in the list of sensible characters because she has understood the norms and conditions of her age, and has chosen to be the wife of a fool, instead of being called an ugly spinster. Elizabeth esteems her very high in her opinion, but is shocked when she accepts the proposal of Mr.Collins. She shares all the tastes of Elizabeth but differs from her in important matters. While discussing the possibility of an attachment between Jane and Bingley, she advises Elizabeth that Jane should make some efforts in this direction. Elizabeth ignoring her remark replies that Jane hardly knows Bingley. She, however, insists on her advice based on practical wisdom and common sense. Soon after her statement, she herself acts according to her views, when she accepts the marriage proposal of Mr. Collins, who though no match to her intelligence is, nevertheless, rich. Charlotte is not so naive as not to understand the

selfish and silly character of her future husband, she just accepts the norms of a conventional society. She knows that an old penniless maid, with nothing to recommend her, is only an exasperating burden to the family and to the society. Commenting on Charlotte's choice of Collins as her husband, C.Linklator Thompson remarks:

> ' Elizabeth knows that Charlotte has plenty of common sense, and is acting with her eyes open, and to be ready to endure the intimate relationship of this " Concerted, pompous, narrow minded, silly man" in exchange for a home, is to Elizabeth so reprehensible that she feels that the worm who does so cannot have a proper way of thinking.[1] '

Elizabeth as she attributes to Charlotte her own sensibility imagines that marriage with Mr. Collins would be as terrible to her friend as it would be to her. But, Charlotte is quite capable of securing exemptions from her husband's society when it becomes intolerable. She is not a romantic, she wants only security in a comfortable home.

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1. Thompson C.Linklater, Op.Cit, p.108

Fanny Price in Mansfield Park resembles Charlotte Lucas, in the sense that she also starts her life in a lower middle class family in Portsmouth. Among all sensible heroines of Jane Austen, Fanny Price seems to be the most rational and wise character. She does not preach or guide her family like Elinor, nor she is under any misconceptions and prejudice like Elizabeth Bennet. She never commits an error. She is mainly a passive character and most of the time in the novel, she responds to pressure from other people in Mansfield Park. She is one of the many children of Lady Bertram's sister who made an ill starred marriage. She is removed from her so large and so little esteemed family , to be brought up among the young Bertrams in luxurious elegance, though not on a plane of equality with them and their expectations. She appears as a shy, modest and a delicate girl of ten years, who is afraid of every body, ashamed of herself, and longing for the home she had left. She makes but a poor figure in a handsome highly placed and opulent family. Her cousin provides some consolation in her distress-first by inquiring after her family, then by fetching her some stationery with which to write

to her beloved brother William, and always, subsequently, by treating her with a consideration and an affection of which all other members of the family seem quite incapable. Not only does her aunt Mrs. Norris continually remind her of her place, her cousins Maria and Julia wilfully ignore her and

> it is not very wonderful that with all their promising talents and early information, they should be entirely deficient in the less common acquirements of self knowledge, generosity and humility.[1]

The sisters are too proud and selfish to notice Fanny, Sir Thomas is involved in his own concern, Lady Bertram is fast asleep, and the family is hustled about, scolded and managed by the odious Mrs.Norris. Mrs. Norris was the wife of the rector of Mansfield and has shifted to Mansfield Park after her husband's death.

Thus Fanny exposes half her life to the indifference or scorn of her adopted family. She has learned self effacement and is rattled, her mind'has seldome known a pause in its alarm or embarasments'. But she learns from affectionate Edmund a love of Nature, a taste for didactic poetry, and the principles of the Established church.

1.Mansfield Park, Oxford University Press, London, 1975, p.99

She is firm in Christian virtues, uncorrupted by selfishness and a stranger to ambition.

She has clarity of consciousness and possesses a strong will of nature. Elaborating this feature of her character Andrew H.Wright remarks:

> '... there is never any question of self contradiction in her character; she behaves with a consistency, a steadiness, which quite plainly show an unquestioned set of values. On the other hand, she is no more wooden humour, she is not simply an inmate vehicle for Jane Austen's moralising.[1]

When she was sixteen, her uncle Sir Thomas goes to Antigue to look after his ailing interests; he takes with him for safe keeping, his extravagant heir Tom. Edmund, his younger son who is a perspective clergyman, becomes the temporary head of the house. Sir Thomas has been a well meaning, upright father and uncle, but he is at the same time incapable of warm concern and intimacy; and with his departure, his daughters Maria and Julia feel only welcome relief

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1. Wright Andrew H, Jane Austen's novels, Penguine Books, London, 1962, p.129

from restraint. The beautiful Maria attracts the young, rich and stupid Mr.Rushworth and gets engaged to him.

Fanny stays at home, humbly but not unhappily, as Lady Bertram's companion. During this period, Henry and Maria Crawford (the half-brother and half-sister of Mrs. Grant) appear as the guests of the parsonage. They had grown up in the dubious care of their ill-mated uncle and aunt Admiral Crawford and his wife. Mary is very pretty and Henry, if not handsome, is captivating. Both are highly intelligent and are lively and clever talkers. Both are emancipated individuals whose sophistication goes well beyond the social attitudes represented by the rural Bertram family.

Henry proves the most agreeable young man, the Bertram sisters had ever known. He balances between Maria and Julia, both of whom are half in love with him, for Maria's engagement to Mr.Rushworth gives her, she thinks, a secure position for flirting with Henry, and is no obstacle to a man of his temper and principles.

But Fanny has an insight into the moral premises of everyone she meets. Fanny is the first to suspect the wicked nature of Henry and his impact on the sisters. In spite of his courtesy and assurance, Henry does not deceive her for a moment,

even before he gives himself away by his flagrant double flirtation with Maria and Julia.

Mary finds Edmund's company increasingly pleasant. Edmund is also fascinated by the lively and intelligent Mary. His growing admiration for her increasingly troubles Fanny. She is neglected by all, and no one perceives that her unconsidered heart has already been given to her cousin Edmund, and that the love making, real or counterfeit, which was going on around her is a source of bitterness to her.

The first test of Fanny's judgment is the first crisis of the story, the first conscious taking of sides. During Sir Thomas' absence from England, Maria and Julia freed from the shadow of their father's authority, and warned by Henry Crawford's attentions, are eager for some positive direction. Tom who has been absent from the scene appears again and wants some amusement. His new acquaintance John Yates comes to Mansfield '... on the wings of disappointment, and with his head full of acting'.[1]

Tom agrees with Yates' suggestion and decides to raise a little theatre at Mansfield, and appoint Yates its Manager. Edmund and Fanny rigidly disapprove of such entertainment, Fanny and Edmund

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1. Mansfield Park, p.107

represent morally strict Sir Thomas in his absence. Yet no one agrees with Fanny and Edmund.

After such discussion of tragedy and comedy, action and sentiment, it is decided to try Mrs.Inchbald's drama of sentiment 'Lover's Vows'. Fanny observes everything with growing dread. The play offends her for several reasons. Maria Bertram (who is already engaged to the rich Rushworth), fascinated by Henry Crawford takes the part of Agatha. Henry plays Fredrick; and to the effusive stage reunion of mother and son, they show an obvious personal attachment.

But nothing makes Fanny more miserable than to watch the bemused Edmund, forgetting all his remonstrances, he plays his part with Mary. He persuades poor Fanny to play the role of Cottager's wife. She has to surrender before Edmund.

> '.... as Edmund repeated his wish and with a look of even fond dependence on her good nature, she must yield. She would do her best. Every body was satisfied- and she was left to the tremor of a most palpilating heart while the others prepared to begin.'[1]

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1. Sense and Sensibility, p.112

Elaborating the situation of Fanny's acceptance, Andrew H.Wright observes:

> She never weakens for a moment, but her acquaintance at last gives a human dimension to her character, not always achieved in the portrayal of her type in fiction.[1]

Fanny is left alone with only her scruples to warn her. It is strange that throughout this episode we feel no sympathy or even pity for her. Explaining this Marvin Mudrick asserts:

> She is always so careful, so exact in points of conscience, that our sympathy has no object. The author arms her with righteousness, and she must prevail. We begin to think with nostalgia of bewildered Catherine Morland, of Marianne Dashwood, that deluded romantic, of Elizabeth and her prejudices: and we look forward gratefully to the Olympian self deception of Emma Woodhouse. Fanny is not of their company.[2]

But on the level of patience, Fanny is superb.

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1. Wright Andrew H, op.Cit, p.130
2. Mudrick Marvin, op.Cit, p.160

Though she can hardly endure Mary's presence, for she knows her to be an irreligious, immoral, frivolous and wordly girl, and sees all the mischief in her actions, yet does not utter anything against her. She shows no aversion against Mary even though she inflicts on her the cruellest of disappointments in half inviting, half meeting Edmund's advances. She suffers inwardly, and conceals her anguish successfully While tortured by jealousy and uncertainty, she never forgets the claims of others. She is gifted with all the feminine heroism. Made the unwilling confidante of Edmund's passion for Mary Crawford, she listens and consoles and shows real magnanimity in never betraying to her cousin her love.

After the marriage of Maria and Rushworth, Henry extends her attention to Fanny. Fanny, more sensible and alert than Elizabeth Bennet, never falls a prey to his flamboyance. She disapproves him from the very beginning. She sees him flirt overtly with the Bertram sisters and thinks him to be a trifler whose "... plan is to make Fanny Price fall in love with me".[1] She stands out against him, despite the most ardent pressure from and the most heated persuasion of both

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1.Mansfield Park, p.121

Sir Thomas and Edmund.

Her attitude towards love and marriage comes into open conflict with the marriage market of the period of her time. She is a critic of that society and resents the gentry's ways of life.

Henry Crawford falls really in love with Fanny, and determines to win her and marry her. He attacks on her weak side, affection for her brother William, and obliges her very soon to dislike him less than formerly.

Edmund, unconscious of the pain he is causing, continues to make Fanny his confidante. He wants Henry Crawford to be connected with his family, both from regard for him and because such a connexion would bring himself nearer to Mary. It is hard for Fanny to have to listen to the man she loves, pressing the claims of another man and pressing them because he is in love with that man's sister.

Sir Thomas sends her to Portsmouth so that Fanny may realise the worth of wealth and comfort. After many years' absence, Fanny returns to Portsmouth to spend two months with her family, in all the noise, bustle and dirt and discomfort of a squalid home. Portsmouth is completely different from what she wishes it to be:

> ... in almost every respect, the very reverse of what she could have wished. It

> was the abode of noise, disorder and impropriety. No-body was in their place, nothing was done as it ought to be.[1]

In Portsmouth her opinions about Henry start changing. Henry himself tries to be better in his ways of life.

The dangerous illness of Tom Bertram reveals the true character of Mary Crawford. She hopes in a letter to Fanny that Edmund will be baronet after Tom's death. This letter does away with Fanny's last illusions, if she has any left, as regards Mary Crawford.

Worse is to come. Henry does not return to Portsmouth, he goes to Richmond to meet Maria Rushworth, and ultimately Maria quits her husband's roof in company with the well known and captivating Mr.Crawford, the intimate friend and associate of Mr. Rushworth.

Shocked by the news Fanny becomes restless. ' It was too horrible a confusion of guilt, too gross a complication of evil... yet her judgment told her it was so.'[2] A letter from Edmund a few days later brings another blow-Julia Bertram has eloped with Yates. Edmund comes to her, dejected, mortified and lost. But Fanny is very happy because the same letter reveals

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1.Mansfield Park, p.119

2.Mansfield Park, p.118

Edmund's intended visit to Portsmouth. Francis W.Cornish comments thus on the Contrast of Fanny's happiness and Edmund's objections:

> Not even here can our authoress abstain from noting the whimsical contrasts and compatibilities of life; Fanny's sense of happiness and relief while so many were miserable, her joy at nearing home.[1]

It is only Fanny whose solace provides a much needed relief to Edmund and his family who lie prostrate with ignominy brought in their lives by Maria and Julia.

Fanny is safe from Crawfords, and Edmund is no longer the dupe of Miss Crawford. Her virtue and patience are ultimately rewarded and she earns the right to be where she is.

The description of Fanny's relationship with Edmund is not so elaborate. It is only in the last Chapter, that Edmund turns towards here consciously. Throughout the novel Edmund behaves like an affectionate brother, who is a source of solace to the poor sister. Then union which is brought out in the last Chapter does not seem

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1. Cornish Francis Warre, op. Cit., p.146

convincing. Edmund is engrossed in his love for Mary Crawford. He turns toward Fanny only when the charm of Mary is finally broken. He realises that he is deceived. He comes to Fanny, not like a lover who seeks her but more like a man ' flying from something he dreads.'

Susan Price is a minor character who appears briefly in the novel. She is the only sensible, intelligent girl after Fanny, in Portsmouth's family. She is the younger sister of Fanny Price and is like Fanny different from other members of her indisciplined and wayward family. She always behaves pleasantly, and knows much is wrong at home. She wants to set it right. Notwithstanding her young age and the adverse environment of her rudderless family, she possesses innate goodness and rare practical wisdom. She brings succour to her sister Fanny who returns from Mansfield Park in a depressed condition.

Susan is aware of the steerling qualities of her elder sister, and wishes to shape herself in her image. When Fanny is married to Edmund, she brings Susan to Mansfield Park to save her from the damaging influence of her family and help her to develope her inherent virtues. After Fanny's

marriage Susan remains with her aunt, Mrs. Bertram to look after and give her company. By her sweet disposition, ungrudging service and sane advice, she endears herself to the inmates of Mansfield Park and becomes indispensable to them.

Anne Elliot of Persuasion is a character of sense, and differs from other sensible characters in the sense that she is never meek, subservient or mousy like Fanny, nor deluded like Elizabeth, or capricious like Emma Dashwood. She remains in her quiet way the mistress of any situation.

Anne is the daughter of Sir Walter Elliot, and is twenty seven, when the story opens. She takes after her dead mother in excellence of character. Her one error which makes the story-as it makes the majority of Jane Austen's stories- has committed eight years before the action starts, when she refused Wentworth's offer of marriage.

Persuasion begins where Emma,Pride and Prejudice and Northanger Abbey, are ready to leave off. In this novel the heroine has become wise through suffering. As a young girl, Anne has been an elegant beauty, but a sacrifice of love and the neglect of her family have destroyed the bloom of her youth. The 'desolate tranquility' of Autumn in the country is in harmony with her

sad resignation to her situation-the frustration of a most loving nature. Like Fanny Price, Anne suffers from a sense of isolation and neglect. She is rejected and isolated by her relations. But she has the capacity to build a defence, a defence against depression, she has mastered the art of knowing our nothingness:

> ...beyond our own circle she is hurt by the selfishness of her relations,but it cannot depress and suppress her.[1]

She has, on the contrary, learned to wring a wry amusement from its manifestation and a continuous stream of ironic reflection plays, in secret, upon both the important aspects of her personality-her unfailing courtesy and her sympathy for other people.

She tries to fill her life with 'duties'. She does all the work for her elder sister Elizabeth who does not care about her. She catalogues the books and pictures at Kellynch Hall, carries out Elizabeth's directions regarding the garden etc, visits the parish with keen interest and devotion:

> With an elegance of mind and sweetness of character which must have placed her high with any people of real understanding, was nnbody

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1.Persuasion, Oxford University Press, London, 1975, p.19

> with either father or sister, her word has no weight, her convenience was always to give way; She was only Anne.[1]

When she visits at Uppercross, she prepares to clothe her memory, her ideas according to the thinking of Uppercross people. Her foolish sister Mary, and the simple and gay Musgrove sisters are all happy in her company. She has more of their confidence than is discreet or desirable, particularly about the way Mary mismanages her children. This confidence is in significant contrast to Kellynch, where nobody confides in Anne at all.

She is the only sensible character in her family. When Mr.Elliot is put in a financial crisis, she advises a programme of retrenchment which will permit the Elliots to continue at Kellynch Hall. But her suggestion is strenuously opposed to her father, who then takes his lawyer's advice to let Kellynch and move to Bath. Like Elizabeth Bennet(when she cautions her father about Lydia's designs(, she becomes detached from the situation when nobody pays attention to her advice. A similar kind of detachment occurs when Anne recognises an obligation to try to communicate about the plans of Mrs.Clay to marry Mr. Elliot. Met by

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1.Persuasion, p.22

stupidity or stubbornness she feels exempt from further effort and let things take their course. Unlike Emma or Elizabeth Bennet, she never imposes her tone upon others, nor in her shyness she shrinks like Fanny. She values her ideas without propogating them; and does what she thinks necessary in certain circumstances. So when Mary urges her to write home about the chance meeting with Mr. Elliot she overlooks the suggestion.

> ... but it was just the circumstance which she considered as not merely unnecessary, but as what ought to be suppressed.[1]

She has the quiet maturity of a sensitive individual, who is loyal to her own values without colliding needlessly and unprofitably with the social group she belongs to, or with people like Lady Russell, to whom, inspite of meeting their limitations, she is deeply attached. Though tender, she is presented as self contained, and with strong hidden power.

Anne Elliot is an incarnation of perfection

1.Persuasion, p.71

She is the centre and point of view of Persuasion. She is good, 'a martyre' in large and small ways, to her sense of duty, but no one shrinks from her as from other lonely heroines. She observes and penetrates in human character surrounding her. She sees clearly without caprice, and needs no supervision to judge the people. Elizabeth Bennet and Emma offer their point of view for the very reason that it may in the end be proved prejudiced, capricious and wholly false.

Anne was charmed by a handsome captain Frederick Wentworth. They had met eight years before when he happened to spend half a year in the neighbourhood of Kellynch. Lady Russell(who is like a mother to Anne), came up with all her claims of birth beauty and mind; Anne must not be allowed to throw herself away on a young man who had nothing to look to but his profession and a reasonable prospect of quick promotion in it. She submitted to her advice in silent constancy. Elaborating the characteristic mind of Anne, Andrew H.Wright asserts that in Persuasion:

> More clearly and more sweetly than in any of the other novels exposed the conflict between two schemes of values: those of

> prudence and those of love. Anne Elliot contains both and the result is a contradiction which causes nearly a decade of unhappiness to her.... yet she is a complete a fully human heroine.[1]

Anne refuses Wentworth for several reasons. Guided by her mentor, she sacrifices her love, but in ' the misery of a parting', Anne has got her chief Consolation from the belief that her sacrifice is 'principally for his advantage'. Lady Russell represents to Anne that a penniless youthful marriage would be a fatal drag in Frederick's career. Her decision to leave him was selfless. Anne is aware of both the internal and the external pressures. She neither overlooks nor rebels against the material base of the society. She knows that if she rebels she would be outcast and if she overlooks the convention, she would be deluded. But she maintains her love and keeps it uppermost in her heart. Throughout the book, she is caught in the centre of a struggle, whose issues precedence, power, money, property-are hateful

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1. Wright Andrew H, Op.Cit, page 167

to her as issues, among people who pursue material goals in a wreckage of personality, and she will remain entangled because she is a woman and unmarried in a society which maintains unmarried women on sufferance, because she has nowhere to go and nothing to say- she waits for the lover who will come to claim her.

Anne has never been able to forget Frederick Wentworth, nor can her prudence dictated a marriage to Charles Musgrove when she was twenty two. Luckily, she stays behind at Uppercross Cottage with her sister Mary Musgrove and family, when Sir Walter and Elizabeth go to Bath. Frederick comes to Kellynch Hall to visit the Crofts, but her hurt feelings and his disbelief that Anne was over-yielding in giving him up creates a barrier between them. He is attracted by the amiable, common place, Musgrove girls. He has not forgiven her but he thinks:

> She has used him ill; deserted and disappointed him, and worse, she had shown a feebleness of character in doing so which his own decided confident temper could not endure.[1]

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1. Persuasion, p.52

Her power with him was gone for ever. In Anne we see a picture of the silent torture of an unloved woman. We observe the plight and the feeling of a neglected woman, compelled to see the love she most longs for, deserting her day by day. In this way, her situation is different from that of the other solitary heroines of Jane Austen, Elinor is conscious that she is loved, but her lover is not free and she long thinks him lost. Fanny is her lover's confidante, and must be miserable when Edmund is happy or sad or when he is in a pitiable situation. Anne bears her lot without the comfort of hope, and without growing hard hearted, jealous or self pitying. She is shown in her gentle speech, thoughtful and helpful actions to be without malice between love and what often passes for love in the Musgrove sisters' attachment to Wentworth. She thought Louisa to be favourite of her lover. With her experience and past memory she could judge that Wentworth did not love them. They were more in love with him. It was a little fervor of admiration from Wentworth's side, but it might change into love.

In the natural course of events, Anne and Wentworth see a good deal of each other. To Anne, his cold politeness, his ceremonious grace were

worse than anything. And she is galled by his warmth and gaiety of attitude towards both the Musgrove girls. She is surpassed, agitated; and pleased when one day he quietly and unexpectedly removed little Charles Musgrove from her; but this incident cannot make her reflect that his attitude towards her is softening. On the other hand, she soon gets more comprehensive evidence that he cannot forgive her defection. He seems to be very much impressed by the firm and constant character of Louisa Musgrove. Anne now realises that Louisa is the girl of his choice. Yet while Wentworth is apparently absorbed in his attention to Louisa, he is not really unobserved of Anne.

The accident at Lyme turns the tables, and Wentworth realises the true, deep, constant character of Anne. He is impressed by her courage at the time of the accident, when Henrietta and Mary shriek and faint, Anne remains helpful and self possessed. In his distress at the disaster for which he was aptly to blame, he instinctively turns to her for support, realising at last thatthe gentle girl who has been too apt to lean on the judgment of others has developed into a strong and sensible woman, no less tender but capable and

self reliant.

The other cause to bring them closer is the chance meeting with Mr.Elliot, who by his open admiration of Anne's beauty arouses Wentworth's jealousy. At Bath Lady Russell informs Anne that she has been the subject of close inquiry and fulsome praise. Anne is intoxicated with the idea of marrying and being the future lady of Kellynch Hall. But being prudent, and true in her love, she brushes aside the idea. It is only her sensible nature, that(though she knows nothing but good about Mr. Elliot) rejects the possibility of marrying him. This rejection is based on the commitment to another, and opposing standard.

Besides this, she is a keen observer of marriage and married life. Her dead mother's uncomplaining loyalty to a foolish husband, her sister Elizabeth's campaigns for matrimonial aggrandisment, deep affection between the Crofts, the Harvillas, the Musgroves etc. provide Anne with material to ponder over the different aspects and different characters of married life.

Her unfaltering constancy to her gone lover expresses quietly but firmly her ideal of

morality in personal relationships. Wentworth also discovers that he has seriously misjudged her character. They are united again when a discussion with Captain Harvilla(which is overheard by Wentworth) about the comparative constancy of men and women causes him to write the letter in which for the second time he offers his heart. Commenting on Anne's consistency D.W.Darding has asserted:

> Like Elizabeth Bennet, she had not deliberately spoken to convey a message to him, but by standing up for her standards and openly avowing them she had played her active part in bringing her lover back again.[1]

The other feature of Anne's is that she is not a prig. She suffers and is vulnerable but she is not self righteously complacent. She consoles and gives company to Captain Benwick in his distresses. Benwick's misty sensibility and his enthusiasm for Scott and Byron evokes nothing more from Anne than a school mistress' advice to an over excited pupil.

Anne is Jane Austen's first heroine who takes a detailed and disinterested pleasure in sensory impressions as for instance in the beauty of autumn. There is a peculiar beauty in Persuasion

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1.Harding D.W,'Character and Caricature in Jane Austen,' Jane Austen, Edit.B.C.Southa, op.Cit, p.86

that has to do with a new allegiance to feeling rather than prudence, to poetry rather than prose; and it springs from a deep sense of personal loss and that is of Anne's. The chapters set in Somerset are pervaded with references to the autumnal landscape, which dominates Anne's emotions as she waits with little hope for a second spring of youth and beauty. While the scenes at Lyme are softened by the romantic landscape and the freshening 'flow of the tide,' Anne is influenced by nature through her moods. Like Coleridge Nature gives her pleasure as well as sadness according to her musings.

Many critics agree that Anne is the personification of Jane Austen herself. Anne like her author does not care for the hustle and bustle of Bath. The difference between Anne and Catherine is that the latter reflects the joy and gaiety of a young girl at her first contact with society, while Anne shrinks from the heartlessness and frivolity of the fashionable crowd around, and devotes much of her time to visit a sick friend.

In Anne we have a reproduction of the same character of 'Sense' that was first displayed by Elinor in Sense and Sensibility. It seems to have been written to show that whatever right be

the author's apparent meaning, she neverintended really separate her heart and head, intellect and passions interrupted by the interference of friends, and kept unshouldered for eight years by the heat of the man's anger at his unmerited rejecti

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CHAPTER II

Victims of Delusion

Smiling and very much alive, sometimes half concealing their grace, wisdom and gaiety beneath a veil of delusion and conceit, these heroines of Jane Austen are basically sensible, kind, generous and graceful. They differ from the heroines of 'Sense' in the sense that they act no exactly in some situations, make wrong judgments and decisions, but in the end they are reprimanded by their mentors, and are reformed.

Marianne Dashwood in Sense and Sensibility provided the most extreme example of romantic sensibility in Jane Austen's novels. Though her abilities are equal to those of her elder sister Elinor's, she is terribly impetuous in all her joys and sorrows. She knows no moderation. She is very kind hearted, generous and interesting but not prudent like her sister Elinor. Her sensibilities are all in the extreme. Jane Austen introduces her in the following words:

> Marianne's abilities were, in many respects, quite equal to Elinor's. She was sensible and clever, but eager in every thing; her sorrows, her joys, could have no moderation.

> She was generous, amiable, interesting:
> she was everything but prudent.[1]

From the beginning she is led into errors of judgment. She makes her own decisions and has her own values. She is no card-board cutout, or a pleasant vacuity like Catherine Norland, ready to have her light head turned by the giddiest fictions, she is not hallucinated or a fool, her difficulties arise from a youthful inexperienced, bold but incomplete awareness.

The whole of her opening conversation with Elinor about Edward Ferras is at cross purpose. Marianne does not exaggerate what she feels, but she misjudges Elinor for not allowing her own feelings equally free expression. Marianne attempts to find external counters for her thoughts, refusing to acknowledge a separation of thought from reality. She knows what a man ought to be. When she comes to know about Elinor's love towards Edward, she remarks: "He is not the kind of young man-there is something wanting-his figure is not striking, it has none of that grace which I should expect in the man who

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1. Sense and Sensibility , p.64

could seriously attach my sister."[1]

The quality of her sensibility in general is shown by the intensity of her feeling for poetry and landscape. She rejoices that she does not love Edward Ferras, for example, when she hears him read Cowper, because "... it would have broken my heart had I loved him, to bear him read Cowper with so little sensibility".[2]

Edward Ferras has a good mind and disposition, but he is diffident, shy and unambitious. Marianne thinks him quite stuffy, he has no feeling for poetry, drawing or nature. He prefers " tall straight and flourishing" trees to 'Crooked', twisted, blasted ones and a troop of tidy, happy villagers to ' the finest bandith in the world.'[3]

Marianne longs for a harmony of understanding and for a unity of man and nature. She denies to establish a personal relationship with nature. She seeks to achieve an identity of inner and outer worlds, even in her distress.

When Miss Austen was planning her

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1.Sense and Sensibility, p.14

2.Ibid. p,15

3.Ibid, p.17

early novels, Mrs.Redcliff was the most popular of all contemporary writers of fiction. Elaborating the nature of Jane Austen's relation to Mrs. Redcliff, C.Linklater Thompson asserts:

> To the younger lady her enthusiasm for sky and landscape, for battered towers and gloomy forests, her invention of stupendous crimes and her employment of quasi-super natural agency to produce thrills, all seemed equally absurd; but reserving for future use the motive of suspense, Miss Austen contended herself for the present with satire of the cult for nature and picturesque.[1]

Mrs.Redcliff's influence is visible in the passages where Marianne bids farewell to the home of her childhood and expatiates to her friends on the beauty of fallen leaves. Her enthusiasm for wild romantic scenery prompts her to exclaim:

> ...with what transporting sensations have I formerly seen them fall ! How have I delighted, as I walked, to see them driven in showers about me by the

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1.Thompson C.Linklater, Op.Cit. p.77

> wind! Now there is no one to regard them. They are seen only as a nuisance, swept hastily off, and driven as much as possible from the sight.[1]

No hero enters a Jane Austen story more romantically than Willoughby. Like the exquisite Viola of Shakespeare who in Twelfth Night, loves the Duke from the first moment that her eyes fall on him, only Marianne Dashwood among all Jane Austen's irreproachably 'Steady' heroines, is rash enough to fall in love at first sight. Handsome cultivated, flamboyant Willoughby entirely captivates her heart and mind. Her notion, : " I shall never see a man whom I can really love. I require so much", vanishes as she finds Willoughby. And so she sets the stage for her dramatic encounter with John Willoughby, who rescues her after she has sprained her ankle while walking on the downs near Barton. She does not study his sentiments or hear his views about art and literature but succumbs to an enchantment which Douglas Bush has described thus:

> /She is instantly enraptured by an eager

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1.Sense and Sensibility, p.56

2.Ibid, p.70

> ardent sensibility which seems completely in tune with her own.[1]

She does not realise the fact that it is strictly necessary to know how to 'cut one's coat according to one's cloth! From that fact alone a series of bitter disappointments are bound to befall this woman who is a lover, a tender and palpitating lover, living entirely in a world of sheer feeling. She has given her heart to Willoughby, believes herself loved by him, and for a short time hopes to become his wife.

The other flaw of Marianne's character is her unreserved behaviour. It exposes her to all the troubles that come upon her afterwards. Reserve is to her mind a disgraceful subjection of reason to common place and mistaken notions. She wants to have special privileges for lovers; ignores conventions and accepts as a gift a horse from Willoughby's stables. She pays the imprudent visit to Allenham, the estate which Willoughby will one day inherit. Though this act is not immoral, it is suspiciously unconventional in the context of class and time. She is so enthusiastically attached to

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1. Douglas Bush,Jane Austen, The Macmillan Press Ltd,London, 1975, p.79

Willoughby that she ignores the important things carelessly. Every one is a rival for her in her affections for Willoughby. She satarises Colonel Brandon as unromantic, who always talks about the coldness, and mosquitoes in the East Indies. She utterly ignores his sincerity and her own decency. She clutches desperately at her love and inspite of the prudent warnings of her sister, she will not take into consideration that happiness in marriage, does depend to a certain degree on such prosaic matters as money and position.

When Willoughby leaves her she wants to die, as she is just not able to live without him. She becomes dispirited, careless of her appearance, and indifferent to everything around her. Her illness is caused by the deliberate neglect of herself. Her meeting with Willoughby in London is very pathetic. Her feverish excess of grief reaches its climax the next day, when she receives the letter from Willoughby in which he calmly denies that his intentions have ever been serious.

However the life force is more tenacious in Marianne than she knows. And as disappointment in love at eighteen must inevitably be softened and at last effaced by the passage of time, and because Jane Austen always shows us life as it is for the

average human being, the day comes when Marianne welcomes another lover very different from that which Willoughby had inspired. About this new attachment Douglas Bush has rightly asserted:

> The author, conscious of the difficulty, calls attention to Marianne's extraordinary fate: a girl who believed that a person could love only once, and only a young person loves at all, found herself happily united, with no settlement superior to strong esteem and lively friendship, to a man who had loved once before who seemed too old for marriage, and who still wears a flannel waistcoat in cool weather.[1]

This hard lesson makes her aware of the danger of trying to create an ideal world for the shelter of an exceptional love. Elaborating this Marvin Mudrick says:

> It must be borne steadily in mind that the author intends to impress upon us these crucial conclusions: that Marianne however, winning and lovely(and she is perhaps more winning and lovely even than

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1.Douglas Bush, Op.Cit, p.82

> Jane Austen had originally planned) must appear to have been made unhappy because Sensibility-unlike Elinor's sense-fatally damages the judgment... that it is Marianne's sensibility which has caused her critical misjudgment of Willoughby; and that only by renouncing sensibility as a guide can she become settled and happy.[1]

Jane Austen proposes to herself a very complex task in the novel: to develop a character embodying sensibility towards nature sense, to introduce sense to sensibility. It is this feature of Marianne's that makes her more engaging than her sister.

Marianne's integrity and honesty of purpose endear her to the readers. She also shares some of Jane Austen's tastes. Like her, she is fond of dances, walks, village life, large sized rooms and poets such as Walter Scott and Cowper.

There exists a resemblance between Marianne and Jane Austen. Marianne has beautiful dark eyes, and, in fact, Jane Austen liked dark eyes. Edward's observation to

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1.Marvin Mudrick, p.Cit. p.81

Elinor expresses Jane's conviction; " My judgment is all on your side of the question; but I am afraid, my practice is much more on your sister's."[1]

Emma Woodhouse in Emma also comes in the category of characters who are corrected by disillusionment and defeat and who afterwards live happily as they have the capacity to learn.

Emma is a rich, intelligent, charming, perceptive but a vain and spoiled girl. She belongs to a very respectable ancient family. Precedence is no problem for her, because she lives with her father and reigns alone at Hertfield. Brought up by a doting governess, she is the mistress of her father's house, almost from her childhood and obliges to manage her invalid father. She wishes to dominate elsewhere as well, and the wish to dominate, unimpeded by anxieties over wealth or rank, quickly transforms itself into action.

Emma is gifted from the beginning with the company of Mr. Knightley, who is not only admirable, but indispensable to her education. When her governess Miss Tylor leaves her to be married,

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1. Sense and Sensibility p.85

Emma takes the charge of Harriet Smith (who is a ward at Mrs.Goddard's School, and whose parents are unknown). In her extension of self conceit Emma persuades herself that Harriet can trap into marriage men whose rank and ambition would lead them to aspire even to Emma. It is not surprising that Emma feels confident of her ability to manage Mr. Elton or Frank Churchill, everyone in fact, except Mr. Knightley. It is Mr.Knightley whose acute and decisive mind circumscribes her mistakes, enlightens her when she commits a flagrant snobbery or stupidity.

Emma and Harriet are the most unexpected companions in all of Jane Austen's work. Emma has no intellectual ties with the sheeplike Harriet and she can gain no material advantage from her; but Emma can manage Harriet according to her wishes. She observes Harriet's beauty with far more warmth than anyone else, believes that Harriet's unknown father must have been a gentleman. She, therefore, takes the necessary steps to wean the girl away from the Martin family to whom Harriet has been greatly attached for many months. She does not think Mr.Robert Martin to be a suitable husband for Harriet. Her first thought is always of rank and family. Mr. Martin is a mere farmer.

She expresses her views about farmers thus:

> A young farmer, whether on horseback or on foot, is the very last sort of person to raise my curiosity. The yeomanry are precisely the order of people with whom I feel I can have nothing to do.[1]

Emma thinks Harriet to be a fit wife for a man belonging to a much higher rank in society-Mr.Elton, for instance- Emma here conveniently ignores the fact of Harriet's being an illegitimate child, hoping that time will show that the girl comes of a highly respectable family. Emma will excuse low birth in no one else, but Harriet's parentless illegitimacy she will talk away with nonsense about gentle lineage. She cautious Harriet about her associates, otherwise people will take pleasure in degrading her. She assures Mr. Knightley that men are attracted only by pretty faces, and Harriet will get a good offer of marriage. Emma merely lies about her hopes for Harriet with Mr. Elton. She has a snobbish and vain attitude towards human

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1. Emma, Penguin Books, England,1971, p.59

relationships. For the sake of social position, she would cheerfully hand over Harriet to the wretched Elton, and will make Harriet miserable throughout her life. Yet with the exception of the young farmer, Robert Martin-not one man through the range of the novel ever shows the slightest interest in Harriet.

Her class consciousness disregards Mrs. Elton from the very beginning, and dismisses her atonce upon learning that she does not belong to a high family. Her snobbery is seen also in her attitude towards the Coles. She thinks it beneath her dignity to mix with them because they have risen to wealth from a much lower position. However, she does respond to their invitation when they give a dinner party and she does so because everybody else has accepted the invitation.

She regards Mr. Knightley's possible attachment to John Fairfax as a very shameful and degrading connection and although here she has other reasons yet unknown to herself, for objecting, it is significant that her first target is Jane's family. Pointing this out Marvin Mudrick says:

> Emma comes to appear less and less an innocuous figure in a novel of simple

> irony. She begins as a representative young gentle woman of her age: Snobbish, half educated, wilful, possessive, and, certainly her consciousness of rank accounts for a good many of her prejudice and cruelties. The facts remains that Emma has unpleasant qualities which persist in operating and having effect.[1]

Accustomed to look after her father's every whim and forestall his every possible discomfort. She tries to extend this duty over her circle of friends and acquaintances as well. Tracing the psychological impact upon her character Frank W. Bradbrook says:

> Emma who is clearly a spoilt child, shows many of the symptoms of psychological disorder which are characteristic of the neurotic personality..., Emma maintains her prominence and attempts to rid herself of her feeling of inferiority by 'adopting' people and ruling their lives. Her neurotic daydreams are being constantly proved wrong, and her judgments of characters and the motives for

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1.Mudrick Marvin, op.Cit, p.184

~~for~~ people's actions are frequently mistaken in a manner that is typical in ordinary every day life of this psychological type.[1]

Some had always kept Jane Fairfax(who belongs by birth to Highbury) at a distance. Jane has been given an excellent education. Emma fully recognises Jane's superior musical talents, but she cannot forgive Jane for being so secretive and uncommunicative. It could have been, as suggested by Mr. Knightley, a subconscious jealousy on Emma's part which prevented her from making friends with Jane. Jane Fairfax would seem to be the natural friend for Emma, but instead she cultivates the more flattering company of Harriet Smith. The apparent lack of snobbery in this particular case and the compassionate interest in the helpless, illegitimate girl are shown to be prompted by a desire to rule and dominate, which is merely one aspect of Emma's adolescent instability and uncertainty, while towards the gifted Jane Fairfax she shows a sense of inferiority. She builds up a vindictive dislike of her, she knows that Jane will never trust or flatter any body. She creates without a shred of evidence the most

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1.Bradbrook Frank W, Emma, Edward Arnold LTD,London, 1961, pp 16,17

outrageous slander about an affair between Jane and Colonel Campbell's son-in-law. The reason of Emma's vindictive dislike, and her invention of this attachment is simply a way of giving herself a spurious sense of moral superiority as Jane in Highbury is to overshadow her in other ways.

Her self-love leads Emma towards self-deception. She prophesises only what she will, and she is always wrong. She will never admit what she herself has not contrived, until the truth strikes her in the face.

Her composure is given its first bad shock when Mr. Elton proposes to her on the way home from the Weston household. In reconsidering her mistake with Elton, she estimates the value of her inheritance and decides Elton was impertinent. She cherishes the idea of a match between Harriet and Frank Churchill, because Churchill's affluence will affect the status of Harriet for material advantages that would uplift Harriet. She knows that in her planning, she will be a means of uphappiness for Robert Martin. But she thinks him only an obstacle to be set aside with no more than a moment's uneasiness. She can stoop to any degree for the fulfilment of her plans. Even the death of Mrs. Churchill is for Emma a means serving to freshen her wholly fanciful hope for a match between

Churchill and Harriet. The person as person cannot engage Emma for more than a moment, her mind cannot rest upon it without making it over altogether into a means. Marvin Mudrick is very bitter in his criticism of Emma. He says that Emma cannot act humanly. She plays God, because she lacks tenderness. She is no better than Frank Churchill and Mrs.Elton, who also lack human touch. Emma's ego will admit nothing but herself. Keeping in view the economic equivalence between herself and Frank Churchill she fabricates an affair between herself and Frank. But Frank is the only character who sees her rightly. He is engaged to Jane Fairfax secretly, but pretends and plays with Emma. He is an egoistic and calculating as Emma. He beats her at her own game, because he is far less deluded. Emma's transformation begins at Box Hill, where she flirts outrageously with Fran Churchill. Further more, she is gratuitously cruel to Miss Bates, she mocks at her dull talk, and so elicits from Mr.Knightley a stern and strong remonstrance. Realising her mistake Emma is deeply touched:

> Never had she felt agitated, mortified, grieved, at any circumstance in her life. She was most forcibly struck.... Time did

> not compose her. As she reflected more, she seemed but to feel it more. She never had been so depressed.[1]

She feels the tears running down her cheeks all the way home. These tears make the turning point in Emma's development. They signify an emotional as well as a mental commitment to a new mode of conduct and to the necessity of Mr.Knightley's approval. She, at last, recognises that her intelligence, wealth, and social pre-eminence demand kindness rather than contempt towards Miss Bates. She awakens to the obligations of her position. Emphasising this aspect Lionel Thrilling remarks:

> We see her in all the elaborateness of mistakes, in all the details of her wrong conduct.... for her self love, though it involves her in self deception, does not lead her to the ultimate deception-she behaves she is clever, she insists she is right, but she never says she is good.[2]

She calls on Miss Bates early next morning to make amends. Her visit brings about another change in

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1. Emma, p.368
2. Trilling Lionel, 'Emma and the Legend of Jane Austen', Emma, edit.David Lodge, Macmillan, London, 1968, p.158

Emma. Her heart had been long growing kinder towers Jane. She invites her to spend the day at Hartfield and to accept some fine arrowroot. When Jane refuses the invitation and returns the arrowroots, Emma realises that a few days of attention cannot compensate for several months of neglect. She understands that her former coolness deserves the present rebuff. At this time Emma is unaware of Jane's engagement to Frank Churchill and of the consequent element of jealousy in Jane's conduct.

She acts with true tenderness of heart, but the play in which she has acted as director must be played out, she must learn how little control she actually has had over those to whom she would be God. Emma is completely ready for redemption. But before this her trial and expiation are necessary.

Her first shock comes at the news of the betrothal of Frank Churchill to Jane Fairfax, an engagement of long standing. She has b een thoroughly flirted by Frank. Next she finds that the superior person with whom Harriet is in love is not Frank Churchill but Mr.Knightley. Harriet's confession of her hopes concerning Mr. Knightley explodes one of Emma's last

misconceptions and impels her to recognise her love for Mr.Knightley. But patience dominates over her emotions. She does not cry or swoon like Marianne in Sense and Sensibility, she tries to conceal her agitation and her newly discovered emotion. Jane Austen describes her inner feelings in these words:

> With insufferable vanity had she believed herself in the secret of every body's feelings, and she had not quite done nothing- for she had sone mischief. She had brought evil on Harriet, on herself, and she too much feared, on Mr. Knightley.[1]

She has finally absorbed the meaning of responsibility: that one must endure the consequences of one's acts, for now her own happiness is involved. It is the beginning of full awareness. She is now not only in doubt of Mr. Knightley's returning her love, she is almost convinced that he loves Harriet instead. She, however, has progressed so far in comprehending pain and wishing to avoid causing it to any one she would not like to hurt Mr. Knightley and is willing to submit to an announcement of his decision to marry Harriet. Mr.Knightley's declaration of his love for Emma,

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1. Emma, p.402

pleases as well as confuses Emma. She sees no way out of the predicament in which Mr.Knightley's declaration has left her. The only scheme she allows herself to send Harriet to London(which results in her final happiness), originates in charity. Her swift repentence and her haste to acknowledge herself in the wrong go far to condone her errors. This imperfect heroine becomes so humble and so anxious to make amends for her failings that like Mrs.Weston and Mr.Knightley we cannot but forget and forgive them all. Emma is before us, with all her misdeeds, but we do not abhor her. There are several reasons, of which one is our intimacy with her. Lionel Trilling observes:

> The relation that developed between ourselves and her becomes a strange one- it is the relation that exists between our ideal-self and our ordinary fallible self. We become Emma's helpless conscience, her unavailing guide.[1]

Her motive in arranging others' affairs is always honest and good. She tries a match between Harriet and Mr.Elton just because she wants

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1.Trilling Lionel, op.Cit., p.158

to uplift the status of her protegee. Her sincere desire is to see Harriet as a distinguished and not a common place person.

Whenever she consciously commits a mistake or takes a wrong judgment her conscience always pricks her. Her fault is her self love though it involves her in self deception as Lionel Trilling has observed- it does not lead her to the ultimate self deception. She considers herself wise and always right, but she never takes the self defensive line when once her bad conduct is made apparent to her. Her attitude with regard to Harriet's visit to the Martins provides an insight into her true character. She knows that Harriet must respond to Elizabeth Martin's call and note of invitation, but she determines to manage the matter in such a way that the Martins should realise that it was to be only a formal acquaintance. She means to take Harriet in the carriage, leave her at the Martin's house, while she would drive a little farther, and came back for her so soon as not to allow Harriet much time for her hosts. But Emma was thinking about the misery which she was inflicting upon Harriet and Martins with this plan. Her heat cannot endure her plan. With Harriet back in the carriage Emma perceives the misery she has caused:

> Emma could not but picutre at all, and feel how justly they might resent, how

naturally Harriet must suffer.[1]

Emma appears to be a very intelligent and wise girl. She makes a great play about the feelings and about the fineness of feelings that one ought to have, she sets great store by literature (although she does not study the books which he keeps). Her mind is shaped and deceived by fiction. She is remarkable for the actuality and truth of hersexual feelings. Inevitably she expects that Frank Churchill will fall in love with her and she with him. It takes but little time for her to see that she does not really respond to Churchill, that her feelings for him are no more than the lively notice that an attractive and vivacious girl takes of an attractive vivacious young man. Sentimental sexuality is not part of her nature.

She is very much devoted to her semi-invalid father and cheers him in the depression due to the absence of her dear mother. Her consistant solicitousness towards a trying valetudinarian is a remarkable virtue. She arranges every comfort for his happiness. Yet she is herself lonely, looking forward with foreboding to the long winter evenings when in the big country

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1.Emma, p.93

house she will be the sole companion of a nervous invalid father. She will have to contend alone with his unreasonable caprices and imaginary ills. But without a hint of impatience, she gives consoling answers for all his fears, reminding of his own kind acts and of the gratitude he has earned from others. She stays behind at Donwell Abbey to go over 'books of engravings', drawers of medals, caneos, corals, shells, and other collections with him, when every one else walks out of doors.

She is also very affectionate and kind towards her sister's children. There is one other aspect of her character which makes her dear to us. Essentially, she is a kind hearted girl, feels real sympathy for those who are in distress or in need. Jane Austen eulogises her nature when she says:

> She was very compassionate and the distresses of the poor were as sure of relief from her personal attention and kindness, her consel and her patience, as from her purse.[1]

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Jane Fairfax in Emma resembles Fanny Price in her ~~patience~~ virtue, fortitude and lonely suffering; she is quite different from Marianne and Emma. She is being categorised with the characters of delusion

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1. Emma, p.33

because of her relationship with Frank Churchill. Being a sensible lady, her choice of this young man as a life partner startles the reader. One wonders whether Jane would marry Fran Churchill whose total quality is a good deal less than admirable. Frank is a 'trifling, silly fellow, ' and a big hypocrits. He does not disclose the fact of his secret engagement to anybody in Highbury, not even to his step mother and his father. As he has bound Jane Fairfax also to the utmost secrecy, he becomes the cause of her lonely suffering. He openly flirts with Emma. His false sentiments make Emma believe that he is more in love with her than she had supposed. Indeed, if Emma had fallen in love with him in response to all the attention he has shown her, she would have felt most wretched and miserable on subsequently learning that he had all the time been secretly engaged to another woman.

The question arises, whether Jane Fairfax was unaware of all these 'qualities' of her fiance. Only one reason seems to be convincing. Though Jane was a clever and beautiful girl, it is also true that she is an unprovided for woman with little to no prospects of independence in life. Like other young women in Jane Austen's novels, she has to seek a husband for herself before it is too late.

Arnold Kettle has elaborated the reason of her choice:

> It is this unrealistic, unromantic and indeed, by orthodox standards, subversive concern with the position of women that gives the tang and force to her consideration of marriage.[1]

Jane does not play a major role in the story, but she soon makes a mark for herself in the society of Highbury and arouses the curiosity of the people there who talk about her with interest, and wish to probe into her life.

Jane Fairfax is the grand daughter of the poor Mrs. Bates. She lost her parents while still a child. She, however, endured her misfortune with fortitude and grew into a sensible and accomplished girl under the benign influence of Colonel Campbell and his wife.

Living constantly with right minded and well informed people her hear['... and understanding had received every advantage of discipline and culture'.[2] Jane Fairfax has been a close friend of the

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1.Kettle Arnold,'Emma' Emma, Op.Cit., p.95

2.Emma, p.64

Colonel's daughter who has married one Mr. Dixon, and gone to Ireland where the Campbells have also proceeded to join her. Jane has, therefore, to return to Highbury before looking for the post of a governess.

During her previous visits, Emma has somewhat guiltily neglected her. She has been, as she herself tells in a petulent outburst to Harriet, Smith, tired of always hearing Miss Bates talk of Jane and her letters. Seeing her again, Emma acknowledges her elegant beauty and distinction, pities her for her helpless situation and resolves to treat her better. But when she finds her cold and reserved, she becomes prejudiced against her and starts ignoring her.

Baffled and engered by Jane's reserve, Emma imagines Jane to have an affair with Mr.Dixon the husband of her patron's daughter, and she is ready to pass herslander on to Frank Churchill. Emma prefers the company of those whom she can master and direct, so she builds up a vindictive dislike of Jane Fairfax precisely because it is clear to her that Jane will worship or trust neither her nor anyone else. She is the only well bred and well educated girl in Emma's social circle who can rival the

superiority of Miss Woodhouse in accomplishments and beauty.

Mr. Knightley's jibe at Emma is significant when he tells her that she sees in Jane the kind of really acomplished young woman she want: to be thought herself.

It is true that Jane is extremely secretive and uncommunicative by nature. But there is a strong reason for this attitude of mind on her part when she is staying at Highbury. She has earlier allowed herself against her better judgment to be persuaded into a secret engagement with Frank Churchill. Having once committed herself to this situation she is very careful in her behaviour, and never betrays herself even though she feels very much embarrassed by her fiance's flirtations with Emma. Frank Churchill's frankness often brings them on the brink of discovery, for instance; he unwisely talks of Mr. Ferry's idea of purchasing a carriage of his own.

It is because her heart cannot but be flattered by the devotion that hes urged Frank to her side, she hears patiently with all his follies till her overstrained nerves give way, an< she quarrels with him over his desire to accompan;

her from Donwell Abbey to Highbury. It is an action which, strange as it may seem in our times, would have certainly proclaimed to all the world the relationship that they were both bent on concealing.

The next day Frank takes his revenge on her by flirting with Emma more shamelessly than ever, and Jane, irritated by his behaviour breaks off her engagement. At this opportune moment the death of Mrs. Churchill removes the obstacle to their marriage, and quick reconciliation follows. Before this happy turn in her fortune, Jane has, however, to suffer terribly, not only from jealousy of Emma's, but also from the necessity of pervarication and the humiliation incurred by the patronage of Mrs. Elton, which, however, she bears much more patiently than Emma would have done.

Catherine Morland in Northanger Abbey begins as a burlesque, of the heroines in Mrs.Redcliff's, Udolpho and Charlotte Smith's Emmeline, two extremely popular novels of Jane Austen's youth. Catherine is presented from the firs as an ordinary girl. Jane Austen's interest in satirising foolish and undesirable elements in

popular Gothic literature appears from the beginning. Douglas Bush has asserted that:

> No other of the Austen novels opens in this strain of playful mockery of the heroine and her milieu, mockery that embraces both the sentimental novel and the Gothic Romance.[1]

Catherine is a young girl, the daughter of a country clergyman of respectability. In a certain respect she is unique among the Austen heroines: both her parents are not only alive but also quite adequate as parents. Jane Austen was rather hard on parents. Where they survive at all, they are usually a trial to their daughters. But Catherine's parents are sensible, unpretentions, modest, generous and well bred. They are, in fact, plain matter of fact people, who seldom aimed at wit of any kind, her father at the utmost:

> Being contended with a pun, and her mother with a proverb, they were not in the habit, therefore, of telling lies to increase their importance.[2]

1.Douglas Bush, op.Cit. p.59

2.Northanger Abbey, Oxford University Press,London 1975, p.19

From the start Jane Austen emphasises the ordinariness of the heroine. She is far from having the dazzling beauty, glamour and accomplishments of the romantic heroine. At the outset nobody but the author knows that Catherine is a potential Gothic heroine. In contradiction to the beautiful high born and accomplished maidens of Mrs.Redcliff's romances, Catherine is just an ordinary, moderately, good looking and sensible girl of the upper middle class. Instead of being an orphan left to her own devices, like Evelina, or Ellena, she is one of a large family warmly attached like Jane Austen herself to her brothers and sisters and quite unaccustomed to admiration or attention.

The neighbourhood of Catherine's home at Fullerton parsonage apparently has provided her with only a small circle of intimate acquaintances and those mostly or the best moral character.

But it would be a mistake to consider her as a mere tabula rasa. In the course of the novel, a number of scattered references are made to the nature of Catherine's family and to the sort of upbringing she has been given. If we combine the bits of evidence with which we are provided in these references about her sheltered

(Catherine has known before her introduction into the wider and more perilous society), it will become evident that her right feeling and innocent thinking, are the gift of this sheltered society at Fullerton.

Her limited circle of acquaintances has provided her with several examples of unpretending merit, but has given her virtually no first hand knowledge of evil in any of its human forms. One of the most important things that is going to happen to Catherine in the course of the novel is her encounter with evil.

She makes her first appearance in adult society by visiting Bath during the fashionable spring season in the company of her kindly neighbours, Mr. and Mrs. Allen. The visit to the celebrated resort is more than a diversion of a few weeks, a mere vacation or interlude. Bath represents the very opening of independent life for Catherine. She has come to Bath with only the parody of a chaperone Mrs. Allen. When she asks for moral advice, all Mrs. Allen can do is to deliver the unimpeachable propostion that 'young people will be young people'. Catherine is, therefore, on her own.

Uncautious and friendly as a newly hatched chick, Catherine looks round upon a world

where everything is wonderful. Catherine must discover for herself the characteristic ways in which human evil manifests itself in polite English society. She will be forced to go as far toward disillusioning herself as her own limited powers will allow. In this task the experiences of her early life can help Catherine in only two possible ways. First, she can hope to recognise evil by its contrast with the sort of goodness she has previously known. Second, she can trust to the experiences of a wider world than that of Fullerton which her reading has vicariously given her. Catherine is fond of reading. We learn that before going to Bath, Catherine has read some history, which she dislikes, some Pope, and some other classics. But it becomes quite clear that Catherine's reading has been of a desultory and light hearted nature, and does not supply anything serviceable in the exploration of varied or hitherto unknown situations.

She makes the acquaintance of Isabella Thrope at Bath. An attachment quickly springs up between the two girls whose brothers have already met at Oxford and they become close friends. Since before meeting the Thropes, Catherine has had virtually no experience with the sort of person who pretends to be something that he is not, and who, therefore, cannot be taken at face value; for a long time it simply does not occur to her to

doubt whether the Thropes are exactly the sort of people they appear to be. John, of course, does not take in Catherine nearly as long as Isabella does. This is because his lies and distortions of fact are so blatant and frequent that even the credulous Catherine cannot help noticing them. With Isabella the case is different. She appears to be beautiful, accomplished, and well read, but in actual fact Isabella is accomplished only in open flirtation, expert in duplicity, and well read merely in the genres of sentimental and horror fiction. She is a character of considerable interest, and has an ongoing vigour and sustaining ambition that daze the sensible country-bred Catherine. She approves of the sort of heroine Isabella is pretending to be, she cannot reject Isabella until she sees through the falseness of Isabella's pretensions. This sort of looking below the surface is something Catherine finds very difficult to do, consciously at least-yet she begins to suspect Isabella after a time.

It is Isabella Thrope however, who first explicitly introduces the Gothic theme to Catherine. Isabella finds no difficulty in making a list of ten or twelve more of the same kind, as Udolpho, Catherine is fascinated by Mrs.Redcliff's novel

Udolpho! She exclaims:

"I have been reading it ever since I woke...
I should like to spend my whole life reading it."[1]

She dwells on its incidents continually in her imagination. She moves steadily towards the Gothic world. Not only has she read the 'right books,' but she has also met her own particular hero in Henry Tilney. She was confronted with the two antithetical brothers-and-sisters pairs, the Thropes and Tilneys; and Catherine is forced to choose between them. Darell Mansell has drawn attention to this recurring pattern:-

> Jane Austen has used this dialectical process over and over. Elinor Dashwood, for instance, moves from a knowledge of Willoughby's mind to the 'very different mind of a very different person' (Sense and Sensibility,p.184) whom she will marry.[2]

Catherine is systematically made to see that each of the pairs represents a moral value. Henry and his sister Eleanor Tilney stand for a moral value, and the counterparts Thropes personify a value Jane Austen wants to condemn.

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1.Northanger Abbey, p.37

2.Mansell Darrel, Jane Austen, The Macmillan Press, London,1978, p.71

From the beginning of their acquaintance (Catherine's with Henry), she shows a natural liking towards him. Henry becomes her moral guide. Henry is aware quite early that Catherine loves him. He finds it delightful to give lessons on the picturesque to a pupil so docile and naive. It is Henry who lays bare the complexities of life to her. When Catherine conjectures that Captain Tilney asked Isabella to dance only out of politeness, and that Isabella will surely refuse because she is engaged to her brother James Morland, Henry Tilney's reply is not just a skit, but a piercing down to a new level of truth: " How very little trouble it can give you to understand the motives of other people's actions."[1] This is a comment that cuts through sensibility and Gothicism to lay bare the common feelings of common life.

Dancing, walking, riding, Catherine is made to thread her way among configurations of Thropes and Tilneys arranged in insignificant social situations that gradually become for her the significant moral choices in the novel. Henry Tilney asks her to dance, and she must refuse because she has promised John Thrope. Isabella and her brother convince Catherine to break an engagement she has made to take a country walk with the Tilneys on the false excuse that she has

just been reminded of a prior engagement to drive with them. By means of this close, patterned movement in the rooms and streets of Bath, Jane Austen makes her chaperonless heroine develop something of a moral system (though her sharp reactions to the false manners of John reveal tha she already had a basically sound, if not a consciously worked out understanding). When, for example, Mrs. Allen hints to Catherine that there may be some impropriety in the unchaperoned drive she has been taking with John Thrope, Catherine immediately reproaches Mrs. Allen:

> "Dear Madam... then why did not you tell me so before. I am sure if I had known it to be improper, I would not have gone with Mr.Thrope at all."[1]

But now the concept of 'wrong' and 'right', 'false' and 'true' becomes quite clear to her. Therefore, when Catherine sees Isabella disregarding some of the most significant and moral rules of propriety, she begins, though tentatively, to suspect that her friend is not quite the generous and sensitive person she pretends to be. When Isabella's

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1. Northanger Abbey, p.67

literary pretensions conflict with everyday behaviour, they create a psychological awareness in Catherine's mind. She grows resentful of Isabella's insensitivity but is rather surprised when she hears that Captain Tilney and Isabella have become engaged (James has been thrown off), she does not much regret the loss of Isabella's friendship.

However in Isabella's company, she is completely lost in fiction. Her originally simple point of view and small vocabulary have been limited by the narrow scope of her reading and acquaintaince. Her increased intimacy with the Tilneys (and a mistaken impression about her wealth on the part of Henry's father the general) evokes an invitation to Northanger Abbey. Though she has learnt much about this fiscal society, she is still slow in seeing through the pretensions of others. The general's pretension to good-breeding and conventional propriety takes in Catherine completely. In so far as Catherine is able to see through Isabella's pretensions, it is because Isabella's behaviour repeatedly and fairly openly violates rules which Catherine understands and approves. But the general pretentiously parades his allegiance to those very rules and for a long time this confuses

Catherine deeply.

However when she is thrown into intimate contact with General Tilney, as a guest in his house, prolonged and close observation of his character forces Catherine to consider the question of why ' so charming a man seemed always a check upon his children's spirits.' Why everyone is afraid of him in spite of his ostentations politeness. It is in attempting to solve this mystery- and for her it really is a mystery- that Catherine tries to apply the notions she has recently derived from gothic fiction to real life.

Before visiting Abbey, Catherine has a notion about Northanger Abbey, as a mysterious building, the kind about which she has read in Gothic novels. The crucial fact is that it is not what Catherine has thought it out to be. Catherine surrenders to this realisation only gradually. Each step of surrender is followed by a solemn resolution never to make the same error or imagination again. Henry encourages her, for instance, to expect a secret manuscript, and she finds a laundry bill instead. Catherine makes the solemn resolution of always judging and acting with sense. But, like Emma, who makes mistakes,

and resolves to do such things no more, and then does them again, Catherine also surrenders very reluctantly to the inductive method.

The General's behaviour again confuses her and she takes a gothic solution out of it. She considers him as a Gothic villain. What Gothic fiction has taught Catherine is that evil men, such as she suspects the general of being, express their wickedness in violent ways, but shroud their crimes in the deepest mystery.

She considers the general a criminal, probably a wife murderer who carefully hides his true character under a mask of gentility.

Henry Tilney finds her one day, fearfully exploring the part of the house in which his mother had died, and assures her that Mrs.Tilney (evidence of whose murder by her husband Catherine has been instinctively expecting and unconsciously hoping she will discover) had died a natural death:

> 'Dear Mrs.Morland, consider the dreadful nature of the suspicions you have entertained. What have you been judging from? Remember the country and the age in which we live....consult your own understanding, your own sense of the probable, your own observation of what is passing around you.'[1]

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1. Northanger Abbey, p.101

Catherine's 'Gothic' romancings having now been effectively exposed as illogical and untrue, the false ideas she has absorbed from her reading of 'sentimental' novels prove totally baseless.

Catherine is soon called upon to put her new found good sense to a difficult test. General Tilney has been courting Catherine as a wife for Henry under the mistaken impression that she is an heirless on a spectacular scale. Learning his mistake he turns her from his house in the rudest possible manner and orders his son to think of her no more. The general, like a Gothic murderer, wants his victim eliminated as completely and quickly as possible from his world. In this situation Catherine behaves with dignity and appropriate feeling.

Her admirable self control, and her generous sympathy for Eleanor's embarrassment in the midst of her own disappointment and distress indicate that Catherine has entered the adult world. Catherine, now is going into the unromantic world of hard facts, the world of common place.

But Jane Austen's heroines cannot go home again, at least to stay. Fanny Price in Mansfield Park is mistaken when she thinks to be

' at home again would heal every pain...'. Emma cannot go back to the 'common course of [illegible] Hartfield days'. The knowledge the heroine has acquired from her entrance into the world would not come or go without leaving any spot or blame. Walking again on the well known road Catherine thinks about'her own change of feelings'...how altered a being did she return!)

Henry Tilney follows Catherine to her parent's home, and explains her father's behaviour. When Henry tells her of the General's performance, Catherine feels:

> ... in suspecting General Tilney of either murdering or shutting up his wife, she had scarecely sinned against his character, or magnified his cruelty.[1]

Catherine has learnt the fact that real people are more complex, and real life situations more difficult to cope with than those to be found in fiction. But Catherine has got the wisdom, she comes to Fullerton with Henry(as his wife). She has to live in a family free of Gothic and sentimental illusions, yet at the same time a family with a stubborn strain of nastiness that has been exposed as the illusions have been stripped away.

1.Northanger Abbey, p.110

Northanger Abbey is a novel which traces the heroine's progress from immaturity and social unease to an adult ability to discriminate between the valuable and the worthless, in literature and in life.

Lady Russell in Persuasion though a sensible lady, does not realise the worth of Captain Wentworth. She is responsible for the sufferings of Anne Elliot.

She is conventional both in her appearance and in her ideas. She is a friend of Lady Elliot, and the substitute to her daughter Anne. She is a widow, attached to rank, and lives at Kallynch lodge. She has a composed mind, and polite manners. Though she is not much gifted in aesthetic sense, as she never listened to Anne's music with ' any just appreciation or real taste.'[1] She was a very good and wise lady. She consults Anne on the future of Kellynch Hall, and advises the most rigid economies. She draws up a workable plan of economy for getting Sir Walter out of debt, and most of her other doings are praisworthy ones. It was she, only after Anne, who disapproved Elizabeth's friendship with Mrs. Clay.

She prefers the company of children and is fond of the noise and bustle of Bath. It is with an amused affection that we see her spirits rise on entering Bath:

Amidst the dash of carriages, the heavy

1. Persuasion, p.310

ramble of carts and drays, the banting newsmen, and the ceaseless clink of pattens.[1]

Her counsel had persuaded Anne to reject Captain Wentworth's proposal. Being in the place of Anne's mother, she disapproves the match. Commander Wentworth was young, not rich, and in a "most uncertain profession", the Navy.

One major rule of propriety is involved inAnne's decision to break her engagement with Wentworth, the rule which governs parents or those who, like Lady Russell, stand in place of parents- when their daughters enter into engagements, which, for financial reasons, are likely to be protracted indefinitely. Parents should advise their daughters to break such engagements. Lady Russell does, in fact, act upon this major rule of propriety in advising Anne to break her engagement with Wentworth.

Anne knew that to see her happy was Lady Russell's foremost desire:

> To Lady Russell, indeed, she was a most dear and highly valued good daughter, favourite and friend. Lady Russell loved them all, but it was only in Anne that she could fancy the mother revive again.[2]

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1. Persuasion p.340
2. Persuasion p.~~503~~ 400

So, Anne allows herself to be persuaded, as it is in some sense her "duty" to accept Lady Russell's advice to end her engagement. Though in later years she regrets the advice Lady Russell had given her, she does not regret her decision to follow it. She told Captain Wentworth about this moral guide of hers:

> 'I was perfectly right in being guided by the friend whom you will love better than you do now. To me she was in the place of a parent... I have now, so far as such a sentiment is allowable in human nature, nothing reproach myself with; and if I mistake not, a strong sense of duty is not bad part of a woman's portion.'[1]

At the end of the novel, though Anne realises that Lady Russell's prudent and proper advice to her was based on mistaken assumptions-conventional consideration which, however, justified in general, did not apply to the love between herself and Captain Wentworth, and though she is resolved that she should never " in any circumstances of tolerable similarity, give such advice;" Anne still accepts the need for and general rightness of the major rules of conduct. Lady Russell's Persuasion is laudable in that it was' exerted on the

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1. Persuasion p.503

side of safety, not of risk'. It is perhaps one of those cases in which advice is good or bad only as the event decides.

The major flaw of Lady Russell's character is that she is a woman with good principles but little idea of the motives and feelings of others. She resembles, Sir Thomas Bertram of Mansfield Park in this respect. In the whole novel not a single sentence is attributed to her where she repents her actions in spparating the two lovers.

Thomson Linklater describes her as a "wordly friend" who is responsible for long grief of Anne. She tries to annihilate Anne completely when she becomes Mr. Elliot's unsolicited advocate, and approves the idea of a marriage between the two. Anne even grasps for a moment at the seductive dream of being the next lady Elliot. Like Emma Woodhouse, Lady Russell does it unconsciously, presuming the ultimate happiness of Anne in the match. She draws an alluring picture of her as the future Lady Elliot of Kellynch Hall:

> 'I own that to be able to regard you as the future mistress of Kellynch, the future Lady Elliot- to look forward and see you occupying

> your dear mother's place... would give me more delight than is often felt at my time of life.'[1]

She is also tainted by social pride, and shares the Kellynch taste for rank, and prestige. She puts more emphasis upon the importance of conventional, polished, and elegant manners. Though she is more sincere, generous, and reasonable than Sir Walter or Elizabeth, she nontheless resembles them in that she regards outwardly proper behaviour as very important, but does not worry much if proper feelings are lacking. Thus when Anne tells her about Captain Wentworth's courtship of Louisa Musgrove, Lady Russell gives herself full marks for the fact that she can decorously "Listen composedly and wish them happy," and does not reproach herself because: 'internally her heart revelled in angry pleasure in pleased contempt,[2] that Captain Wentworth had confirmed her low opinion of him.

She has been unfairly influenced by outward appearance. As Captain Wentworth's manner had not suited her own idea of manners, she was quick in suspecting them to indicate a character of 'dangerous

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1. Persuasion ,p.450
2. Persuasion, p.430

impetuosity'; and that because Mr.Elliot's manners made her happy, she was quick in judging him as the man of " the most correct opinions and well regulated mind".

Lady Russell as Jane Austen asserts lacked:' quickness of perception,... nicety in the discernment of character, a natural penetration.[1]&' but she was a very good and sensible woman. She loved Anne better than she loved her own self. When her ignorance of discernment was removed, she found little difficulty in attaching herself as a mother to the man who secured the welfare and happiness of her dear child.

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1.Persuasion, p.313

CHAPTER III

The Nitwits

Jane Austen was strongly inclined to comedy. Her first literary impulse was humorous, and to the end of her life humour was an essential part of her personality. Her fools as a class of characters, are considered, if not superior, equal to those of Shakespeare's. These apparently simple characters less complex than any other group of characters in Jane Austen's novels. There is a collection of absurd persons in her realm of characters, quite sufficient to make her fortune as a humorist. It is the angle of her satiric vision, the light of her wit that gives its peculiar glitter and proportion to her picture of the world.

Her wisest personages have some dash of folly in them, and her least wise have something loveable about them. There are, however, a few

figures about whom we may have some doubt as which technique of presentation is being employed in their delineation: whether the traits of a real character are being heightened to the point of implausibility, or whether what is offered is to be understood as caricature.

Marianne Dashwood is the clearest and most interesting example of the mixed treatment. Her fastidious nature and early amorous affair are presented in such a manner that although hers is beyond doubt a sober portrait, some of its aspects appear as comic.

Emma's impulse to reform sometimes leads her to comic extremes, as, when, disgusted by the results of her own actions, she elevates her ignorant friend Harriet Smith's simple mindedness to the level of a desirable virtue, and sometimes to near disaster, as when her decision to cease meddling in the affairs of others prevents Emma discovering that it is Mr. Knightley whom Harriet admires and not Frank Churchill.

The same comic tinge exists in the handlin of Catherine Morland in Northanger Abbey. Although she is the heroine and undoubtedly meant to have our sympathy, still she is treated at many points as a caricature. Her Gothic imaginings in the Abbey are an example to show her as a comic character.

Elizabeth in her following conversation with Darcy in Pride and Prejudice seems to enunciate Jane Austen's satric principles:

> I hope I never ridicule what is more wise or good. Follies and nonsense, whims inconsistencies do divert me, I own and I laugh at them whenever I can.[1]

David Cecil emphasising the overpowering nature of Jane Austen's humorous tendency has remarked:

> Indeed, youthful romance, unless she could laugh at it, was not within Jane Austen's province.[2]

Jane Austen's imagination was, to a certain extent the imagination of a comic story teller. She no doubt draws a true picture of life but it never fails to amuse us.

In this chapter only those characters are mentioned who are good hearted, simple and win our admiration. Though some of them appear

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1.Pride and Prejudice, p.102

2. Cecil David,'Poets and story Tellers, edit.Constable Company, London,1960, p.105

vulgar at sometime, but on the whole their actions are well intentioned.

Mrs.Jennings in Sense and Sensibility provides us with a delicate and more entertaining comic picture. She is an admirable sample of Jane Austen's great forte; the delineation of common place foolishness, especially distinct from eccentricity. Jane Austen brings out the main feature of her character thus:

> Mrs. Jennings, Lady Middleton's mother was a good humoured, merry fat elderly woman, who talked a great deal, seemed very happy, and rather vulgar. She was full of jokes and laughter, and before dinner was over had said many witty things on the subject of lovers and husbands.[1]

Her home, ever since the death of her husband, who had traded successfully in a less elegant part of London, was near Portman Square. She had an ample fortune. As both her daughters were married she was interested in promoting the marriage of others. She considers a love affair as good a sport as a fox hunt and is sure that girls like to be joked about the lovers. Her business in life was the curiosity of divining who are the pairs in love with each other, or likely to be in love.

1.Sense and Sensibility, p.34

She was remarkably quick in the discovery of attachments, and had enjoyed to see the blush and vanity of many a young ladies. She had all of Sir John's indiscriminate cheerfulness. Her tactless curiosity and thoughtless gossip offend the Dashwood sisters in the first meeting with her:

> Marianne was vexed at it for hersister's sake, and turned her eyes towards Elinor to see how she bore these attacks, with an earnestness which gave Elinor far more pain than could arise from such common place raillery as Mrs.Jennings.[1]

Her flair for outings (she was a great wanderer) is as often at fault as Emma Woodhouse's. But her discovery, as early as the eighth chapter, that Colonel Brandon, a friend of Sir John Middleton, is in love with Marianne Dashwood, is to be sat down to her credit. But Marianne finds it offensive, the idea of marriage with ~~an~~ a man so old and so indolent.

Mrs. Jennings is always prominent whether at Barton or in London, with her 'noisy cheerfulness'. Large officious, voluble, and observant; she is the most conspicuous figure in any company. She is full of plans to help everybody, and does not spare herself. She is usually wrong in her conclusions and judgments,

in matters of fact and matters of taste, but by no means always wrong in matters of feeling. Her tactless, persistent prying, and irresponsible gossip are thus aroused at the sudden departure of Colonel Brandon from Barton Park:

> "Something very melancholy must be the matter, I am sure," said she, " I could see it in his face. Poor man! I am afraid his circumstances may be bad.... May be his sister is worse at Avignon, and has sent for him over....Well I wish him out of all his trouble with all my heart and a good wife into the bargain."[1]

The resemblance of her incoherent, inconsistent and long talk to that of Miss Bates is quite striking. Her gossip and curiosity prove a frequent source of torment to both the Dashwood sisters.

But her kindness and generosity far outweigh her want of refinement. She grows on us, in the way as do some people in real life for whom we at first feel an instinctive dislike due to some displeasing trait, but not arising from any serious deficiency in character. O.W.Firkins has, however, presented a different view of the

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1. Sense and Sensibility p.70

inconsistent character of Mrs. Jennings:

> Miss Austen's tolerance of inconsistency is evident in the changes undergone by two characters Mrs. Jennings and Mr.Palmer, in the shifting exigencies of a varied novel. Mrs. Jennings as we first see her is a vulgar gossip, wholly foolish and wholly contemptible. In the course of the story she becomes a convenience to Miss Austen, and Miss Austen is too robustly English to view any convenience with unqualified contempt. Mrs.Jennings is revamped. Her cheap good nature is changed to an endearing benevolence, the folly which had pervaded and constituted her character is reduced to a tincture that makes her virtues pardonable by making them diverting.[1]

Mr. Firkins is too bitter in his criticism. Mrs. Jennings is kind, warm hearted but her effusions, and ways of helping others are distressing, and, sometimes almost ridiculous. In her tactless and misguided attempts to see Colonel Brandon well married, she supplies herself with endless joke and vulgar talk. She is skilfully portrayed as the apparent vulgarian whose

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1.Farkins O.W.,Jane Austen, Horace Marshall & sons London, p.81

good nature is more important than her vulgarity. Robert Liddell has seen her as a flat character:

> I do not think those critics are right who see either a change or development in her character or a change in the author's attitude to her.[1]

It is Marianne's illness (after Willoughy leaves her) which gives her the opportunity to exercise virtues of a sort ~~of~~ to make her vulgarity and bad taste appear matters of no importance in comparison. Elinor and Marianne go to London as the guests of Mrs.Jennings. Marianne, wholly occupied as she is with thoughts of Willoughby, meets him only to find that he is on the point of marriage with another woman, an ~~heiress~~ heiress. Marianne passes through this agony-careless and neglectful of her health, she contracts penenmonia and very nearly dies. Here Mrs. Jennings with all her affection,love and generosity comes to her help. She is so kind and hospitable to the love sick Marianne, whose selfish neglect of what is due to a hostess she might well have resented, that we begin to love Mrs. Jennings. To see Marianne worried she cries:

> 'Poor soul! how it grieves me to see her! And I declare if she is not gone away without

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1. Liddell Robert, Jane Austen, Longman, Gre And Co. LTD, London, 1963, p131

> finishing her wine! And the dried cherries too! Lord! nothing seems to do her any good. I am sure if I knew of anything she would like. I would send all over the town for it.[1]

In her affectionate, though tactless attempts to help her ailing guest, a generous sympathy shines through each comic thought and ridiculous action. She stays with Elinor and Marianne during the latter's illness, while everyone flies from the risk of infection. Her heart was really grieved. She saw an early death in Marianne's illness, and pitied upon her. On her compassion Marianne had other claims. She had been for three months her companion, was under her benevolent care. Marianne was deeply moved when Mrs. Jennings said that Marianne might probably be to her what Charlotte was to herself. Though we may smile at the consolations as she offers' the glass of constantia' and the'Variety of sweet meats and olives, and a good fire'. G.B.Stern eulogising the character of this lady remarks:

> Yet Mrs.Jennings improves so much on closer acquaintance, that possibly Miss Austen was not aware herself, in the early Chapters

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1.Sense and Sensibility, p.82

> of the book how much sturdy kindness and loyalty (and sense of decency) too, in all that really mattered) were concealed by a superficial lack of manner, of delicacy and tact.[1]

Marianne, when she recovered from her illness and infatuation with Willoughby, was ashamed of the indifference and contempt which she had shown towards Mrs. Jennings. Absurdity and impertinence, the words first used by Marianne to describe Mrs.Jenning's usual conversational drift, give way to earnest gratitude, respect and kind wishes, when she bids her hostess good bye. Yet Mrs.Jennings has not changed. She is the same gossipy, vulgur, but kind and affectionate lady, it is Marianne who has changed.

Though foolish in her actions, Mrs.Jennings is not altogether undiscriminating. It is she who pronounces the final judgment on the baseness of some of the other characters. She dislikes Mrs. John Dashwood for her obvious coldness towards Elinor and Marianne. She is indignant about Willoughby's treatment of Marianne. She remarks

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1.Smith Sheila K, G.B.Stern, More Talking of Jane Austen, Carsell and Company, London,1950, p.92

prudently:

> Well, it is the oddest thing to me, that a man should use such a pretty girl so ill! But when there is plenty of money on one side, and next to none on the other, Lord bless you! they care no more about such things.[1]

Equally commendable is her behaviour when she hears that in spite of Mrs.Ferras' anger, Edward is determined to remain faithful to his engagement to Lucy Steele. She bluntly tells John Dashwood that his mother-in-law has acted meanly in disinheriting Edward for his engagement to Lucy. She declares that as he is cast off by his family, and is penniless, she will offer money and lodgings to him. Her 'naturalness' and her blunt sincerity' have removed the misconception of Marianne's erroneous assumptions about the proper relationship between marriage and money. Mrs. Jennings has a firm belief that money should not be a hindrance in uniting the lovers. Ian Watt has convincingly analysed this trait of her character:

> ... Mrs.Jennings has the essence of what really matters as regards both sense and

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1. Sense and Sensibility p.194

> sensibility. Once her intellectual judgments are made, and her benevolence feelings are engaged, she acts disinterestedly and energetically, siding with Elinor and Marianne against the wealth and family connections of the Dashwoods and the Ferras.[1]

She is always kind and benevolent to the needy. She paid Nancy Steel's expenses for her return journey to Exerter. Apart from all this, Mrs. Jennings emerges as a good mother to her two extremely tiresome daughters, the frosty Lady Middleton and foolish Mrs. Parmer. She loves them equally. She is even incapable of taking offense from her offensive son-in-law, Mr.Palmer, when he remarks to his wife:

> "I did not know I contradicted anybody in calling your mother ill bred.[2]"

"Aye, you may abuse me as you please," said the good natured old lady, " you have taken Charlotte off my hands, and cannot give her back again. So there I have the whip hand of you." F.B.Pinion is correct when he observes:

> Despite her failings Mrs. Jennings

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1.Ian Watt, 'On Sense and Sensibility' Jane Austen edit. Ian Watt, Prentice Hall, Ince Englewood Ciffs, USA, 1963, p.48

2.Sense and Sensibility p.65

> has a warm heart, and commends herself the more one know her. To some extent, she is precursor of Miss Bates.[1]

Mrs. Charlotte Palmer the younger daughter of Mrs. Jennings exists chiefly to laugh and speak foolishly. Though she resembles her mother in good nature, she out weighs her in absurdity. Charlotte was several years younger than her sister, lady Middleton, and totally unlike her in every respect. She was 'short and plump,' less elegant in her manners but good humoroued at all times(to the point of caricature). She reveals the boisterous Mrs. Jennings. Commenting on the silliness of Mrs.Palmer C.Linklater Thomson writes:

> A woman(Mrs.Jennings) of such sterling qualities ought surely to have had daughters more attractive than Lady Middleton and Mrs.Palmer. Lady Middleton is indeed, completely unsympathetic, and Charlotte Palmer though possessing something of her mother's sweet nature far surpasses her in silliness and ineptitude.[2]

1.Pinion F.B., A Jane Austen Companion,Edited by Macmillan, S.T.Martin's Press, London,1973, p,240.

2.C.Linklater Thomson Op.Cit.p.91

She resembles the lady who has been described in Miss Austen's letters that she held up her head and smiled. She appears with a smile, and smiles all the time except when she is laughing.

Her speech often shows a lack of intelligence, and vulgar affectation. Like Mrs. Jennings she also take interest in others' affairs, and is happy without any cause. She finds amusement in her husband's rudeness, who often prefers a news paper or billiards to company and conversation. Bursting with the admiration of everything in Mrs.Dashwood's house she exclaims:

> 'Well what a delightful room this is! I never saw anything so charming! Only think, mamma, how it is improved since I was here last! I always thought it such a sweet place ma'm! (turning to Mrs.Dashwood) but you have made it so charming!.... I should like such a house for myself! Should not you Mr.Palmer?'[1]

Mr.Palmer made her no answer, and did not even raise his eyes from the newspaper.

"Mr. Palmer does not hear me" said she laughing, he never does sometimes. It is so ridiculous!" She laughs loudly at her husband's insolence and calls heaven and earth to witness how droll he is. Her husband cannot quarrel with

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1.Sense and Sensibility p.35

her for she has not wit enough to be susceptible to his sarcasm. On her declaration that"how charming it will be, when he is in parliament!... how I shall laugh! ..."Her husband took no notice of her. She continued her foolish talk without realising his feelings. On some of her silly remark her husband scolds her:

> 'I never said anything so irrational. Don't palm off all your abuse of language upon me.'[1]

Instead of getting abased she declares:

> 'There now, you see how droll he is. That is always the way with him! Sometimes he won't speak to me for half a day together and then he comes out with something so droll-all about anything in the world.'[2]

Mr.Palmer has some peculiarities like Mr.Pennet. Captivated by youth and beauty he got united to a woman of foolish understanding and no cultivation. Ian Watt comments very rightly in this respect:

> Mrs.Palmer is a ludicrously optimistic expression of her brother in law's jovial gregariousness, while her husband flaunts

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1.Sense and Sensibility p.37
2.Ibid p.38

> his rudeness as if it were an emblem of social distinction, a masculine variant of Lady Middleton's inarticulate and insensitive elegance.[1]

Later Elinor exposes her own and the novelist's explanation and judgment of the marriage of Mr.Palmer:

> His temper might perhaps be a little soured by finding, like many others of his sex, that though some unaccountable bias in favour of beauty, he was the husband of a very silly woman,-but she knew this kind of blunder was too common for any sensible man to be lastingly hurt by it-. It was rather a wish of distinction she believed which produced his contemptuous treatment of every body, and his general abuse of everything before him.[2]

Mrs. Palmer resembles Mrs.Elton (in Emma) in her contradictory talk. Praising a thing unconsciously, simultaneously she declares it ugly. Her foolishness knows no bounds when replying Elinor to her queries about Willoughby she contradict

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1.Ian Watt, op.Cit. p.47

2.Sense and Sensibility p.92

herself by describing him sometimes more beautiful, and sometimes just equal to Marianne.

Her smiling foolish nature is not affected even by untoward incidents, rather they give her fresh merriment. When she returns to her country house she finds material for laughter in the loss of her favourites plants by frost and the depredation of a fox in her poultry yard. It is impossible for anyone to be more thoroughly good natured or more determined to be pleasant and laughing than Mrs. Palmer. C.Linklater Thomson commenting on her ever happy state writes that good natured smiling is certainly better than useless lamentations. But continuous 'sunshine' becomes boring.

Though follish, she is generous and innocent in laughter, she talks with a genuine and often engaging vivacity and laughs with a maddening laugh that may well be drawn from life. She is hospitable, warm-hearted and affectionate like her mother.

It seems abundantly clear that in reading Jane Austen's novels we are not intended to take all the figures in the same way. Some characters are presented as stupid and insensible but with a golden heart; while others are foolish, irrational as well as mean and vulgar.

Lady Bertram resembles in her vacant mind to Mrs. Palmer. Reginald Ferrer has rightly observed that Lady Bertram (the younger sister of Mrs. Norris in Mansfield Park) is one of the literature's most finished fools. She is an easy going, indolent, and foolish lady. She was Maria Ward of Huntingdon, who made an exceptionally good marriage to Sir Thomas Bertram of Mansfield Park. Being a perfect beauty she fared very well in the marriage market. She was a successful beauty all her life. With her own experience, she gives for the first and of course for the last too a piece of advice to Fanny about her prosperous marriage to Henry Crawford.

Middle aged, stupid, maternal persons are favourite butts for Jane Austen, and Lady Bertram is one of them. She is kindly but very lazy, who cares more about her little pug than her household. Even advising Fanny on a serious matter she switches over to her pug:

> 'And I will tell you what, Fanny, which is more than I did for Maria: the next time pug has a litter you shall have a puppy.'[1]

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1. Jane Austen Mansfield Park p.142

By the side of her strong, energetic sister Mrs.Norris, Lady Bertram is the pale shadow of a woman, whose circumstances depriving her of all need for industry have so confirmed her natural sloth that she seems only half alive. She is completely mindless and almost immobile, concerned with nothing but the indulgence of her mild inexorable wants. No care, no entertainment can induce her to take any interest in the affairs around her. Others arrange and plan and sh hardly lifts an eye or apply her mind. While playing a card game, Thomas inquired how she enjoyed and learnt the game. Her reply will tell her indolence:

> 'Oh dear, yes very entertaining indeed. A very odd game. I do not know what it is all about. I am never to see my cards; and Mr.Crawford does all the rest.'[1]

She was very much dependent upon her niece Fanny. Her relationship with Fanny begins in a thoughless exploitation of her as cruel (in its own way) as Mrs. Norris' malicious attacks on this poor relation. There is a less obvious cruelty, however, in Lady Bertram's

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1. Mansfield Park, p.5

selfish acceptance of the ten year old Fanny as a good little thing who can fetch and carry for her and her calm assumption that the grown up Fanny will not wish to visit Southerton or dine with the Grants and leave her alone. Her husband, on the contrary was an excellent uncle. He concerned himself with the children of his wife's sister as though they were his own.

Lady Bertram herself remained fairly tranquil when the desperate appeal from Portsmouth(to sponser Mrs.Price's children) arrived after eleven years of estrangement between the sisters. So long divided and so differently situated the sisters were that their ties of blood were little more than nothing. An attachment, originally as tranquil as their tempers had now become a mere name. Mrs. Price did quite as much for Lady Bertram as the latter would have done for Mrs. Price. Three or four Prices might have been swept away, any or all except Fanny and William, and Lady Bertram did not even pay lip service to her sister. She might have caught from Mrs. Norris' lips the cant of its being a very happy thing and a great blessing to their poor dear sister Price to have them so well provided for.

Her selfishness added with laziness is extended to her daughters as well. She has delegated Mrs. Norris the duty of supervising the girls' education. She herself paid not the smallest attention, as she had no time for such cares.

Jane Nardin thinks that morally she is a cipher. She has no principles good or bad. Not even maternal affection can induce her to take any interest in the affairs of her children. She will not even take the trouble to visit Maria's future home. Flirtations and jealousies are outside the field of her perception. Sir Thomas was a constraining influence, and in his absence his daughters feel a new freedom. They indulge in all kind of flirtation with Henry Crawford. When the news of the catastrophe(Maria's elopement) bursts upon her, she shows no trace of compassionate attention for her unhappy child. All she wants is the consolation for herself in the dreadful disgrace that has overwhelmed the family:

> To talk over the dreadful business with Fanny, talk and lament, was all Lady Bertram's consolation. To be listened to and borne with, and hear the voice of kindness and sympathy

> in return, was everything that could be done for her. To be otherwise comforted as out of the question.[1]

Lady Bertram herself did not think deeply on any matter, howsoever serious it may be. But guided by Sir Thomas, she thought justly on all matters. She saw, therefore, in all its enormity, what had happened, and what will be the consequences of Maria's fall. She did not resent when her sister and daughter were turned out of the house.

However the maternal instinct lying deep in her displays itself when Tom is brought home seriously ill. Tom Bertram's illness has an equally beneficial effect on his mother. Until confronted with it, nothing has disturbed her placid existence in a corner of the sofa, pug beside her and Fanny to wait on her. But now Lady Bertram suddenly becomes a real and affectionate mother. She gradually becomes more composed, though she cannot think lightly of guilt and infamy, and has come to terms with 'the loss of a daughter' and a disgrace never to be wiped off. Previously her letters to Fanny conveyed little substance in a grand, amplifying

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1.Mansfield Park p.318

style, only when she saw how ill Tom was, did she express herself as she might have spoken in the language of real feeling.

Lady Bertram is a delightful creature and second only to Mr. Woodhouse in good nature. Her maternal affection is quite evidence in the last chapters of the novel. Commenting on the change of her behaviour G.B.Stern remarks:

> ... Tom's illness works a transformation touchingly revealed in her letter to Fanny, which begins by a sort of playing at being frightened, in long phrases, and ends by her writing as she speaks, in simple sincere platitudes of maternal alarm.[1]

In spite of her indolent selfishness she rises in our estimation. Though made of the same stuff as Mrs. Price, she is respectable because of her constant association with Sir Thomas.

In her own character she is useful because she has a sound grasp of fact and no personal prejudices. She speaks very little, but whatever she says is a fact which she unconsciously utters. When Edmund has almost persuaded

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1.Stern G.B., Op.Cit, p.85

Maria that it is improper for her to act as Agatha in the play, Lady Bertram quite unconsciously suggests the one thing-Julia's taking the part-that will make Maria act-whatever the consequences.

Sir Thomas might be flattered and hoodwinked by his sister-in-law, but Lady Bertram (although her indolent good temper, her consideration for her luxuries only, and the many uses she has for the engagement of her sister's time prevent any actual or open humiliation of Mrs. Norris), occasionally reminds her that she is deluded, and is distorting fact. When Mrs.Norris tells about Fanny's learning good things from her cousins, Lady Bertram replies with quiet and caustic irony.
" I hope she will not lease my poor pug... I have just got Julia to leave it alone."

She sometimes declares with her remarks to her sister that she is not deceived with her talk:

> " Then you will not mind living by yourself quite alone?"
>
> "Dear Lady Bertram! what am I fit for but solitude?... if I can but make both ends meet that is all I ask for."
>
> " I hope sister, things are not so very bad

with you neither-considering Sir Thomas says you will have six hundred a year."[1]

She has proved that for all her indolence she is not a fool. She has much of Mrs.Allen who in a way precedes her, and something of Mrs.Musgrove who succeeds her, nevertheless she has an individual voice of her own, which can be identified. The tone and rythm of her speeches are individual, Mrs.Allen could not have made any of those speeches. It is a piece of real character creation. Mrs. Allen never thought on any matter more important than muslin.

It is in Miss Bates in Emma that Jane Austen exploits most delicately the technique of going behind the ridiculous features of a caricature. Miss Bates is a poor, benevolent, ridiculous chattering old spinister, and is one of the most notabl creations of Jane Austen's. Jane Austen, as we know from her way of speaking of her neighbours in her letters to Cassandra, was grateful to the fellow creatures who gave her so much amusement. But she love Miss Bates because she is loveable.

In Miss Bates, Miss Austen has used the

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1.Mansfield Park p.312

ripest and kindliest treatment of a character. Here alone she can laugh at her and still likes her, elsewhere her amusement is invariably salted with either dislike or contempt.

Miss Bates is one of the most unusual and fascinating creatures in Jane's novels. There is a symbolic relationship of contrast between Emma and this Comic Character. Comparisons between them seem inevitable. Harriet actually suggests one and Emma replies huffily: "... between us, I am convinced there never can be any likeness, except in being unmarried." Indeed Jane Austen does seem to have designed Miss Bates as her heroine's opposite in some important respects. Emma is introduced as 'handsome, clever and rich', Miss Bates as 'neither, young, handsome, rich, nor married.' Emma thinks too much of herself, Miss Bates and her mother ' think so little of themselves.' Emma has a sharp, critical intelligence, Miss Bates 'loved every body.' Emma congratulates herself on her ability to make discoveries, Miss Bates having been favoured with one of them, can only reply humbly, " I do not think I am particularly quick at those sort of discoveries. I do not pretend to it. What is before me, I see."[1]

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1. Emma, p.35

The peculiarity which makes her the dread and wonder of her neighbours is her speech. People and things crowd into her mind in a muddle without sequence or relativity, and are poured forth in a flood of talk. She has enough of womanly kindness and other qualities to make her a real living person, even a good Christian woman. But intellectually she is a negative fool. She has not mind enough to fall into contradictions. Her fluent talk only requires memory. She cannot distinguish the relations between things. She is the rambling monologist, but she differs from her tribe in several interesting particulars. There is no mistaking the quality of Miss Bates' heart, whatever her appearance may be, it is a mistake to put her aside as merely a vulgar woman-her vulgarity is superficial, her worth real. Lionel Trilling has emphasized her innocence thus:

> Miss Bates is possessed of continuous speech and of a perfectly free association of ideas which is quite beyond her control, once launched into utterance, it is impossible for her to stop. She is a fool, but she is a fool of a special and transcendent kind. She is a child, who has learned nothing of the guile of the world[1]

1.Trilling Lionel, op.Cit., p.148

Miss Austen has not used her chatter only to evoke laughter, but to convey the scene and to tell us what everybody is doing. Her speeches are highly informative although a general impression of triviality and incoherence is preserved. One monologue from her saved pages of narrative. Her meanderings are generally more to the point of the plot than are Mrs.Bennet's. A great deal of the idea of Highbury as a community comes from Mrs.Bates

> "For would you believe it, Miss Woodhouse there he is, in the most obliging manner in the world fastening in the rivet of my mother's spectacles-the rivet came out, you know, this morning.... I meant to take them over to John Saunders the first thing I did, but something or the other hindered me at the morning; first one thing, then another, there is no saying wha . At one time Patty came to say she thought the kitchen chimney sweeping... Then Mrs. Wallis sent them by her boy, the Wallis ca be uncivil and give a very rude answer, but hav never known anything but the greatest attention from them."[1]

Miss Bates is a character of great importance to Jane Austen's purpose in Emma. She

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1. Emma, p.65

is a great talker upon little matters, and like Anne Steele's chatter in Sense and Sensibility, and Lydia Bennet's in Pride and Prejudice, her talk reveals matters basic to the plot. In the flow of Miss Bates' chatter at the Crown Inn are scattered the evidences, unconsciously absorbed and relayed without prior analysis, yet perfectly accurate, of Frank Churchill's attentions to Jane Fairfax during the very period that Emma, misled by his gallantry, fancies him to be attached to herself.

She had a deep affection for her niece Jane Fairfax. Miss Bates' talk, always kept intelligible through its elliptical chain of associations, reveals important bits of information about Jane Fairfax. It is only her flow of talk from which Emma snatches enough to imagine that Jane has a secret love for Mr. Dixon. Then came Frank Churchill's blunders, he asked what became of Perry's plan of setting up his carriage. He believed that he had heard of it from Mrs.Weston, but she denied all knowledge of it. He was,therefore,aware that he must have known of it through his calendestine correspondence with Jane and tried to pass it off as something he must have dreamed. But Miss Bates will not let him fob off like that:

> Why, to own the truth if I must speak on this subject, there is no denying that Mr. Frank

> Churchill might have- I do not mean to say that he did not dream it- I am sure I have sometimes the oddest dreams in the world-but if I am questioned about it, I must acknowledge that there was such an idea last spring, for Mrs.Perry herself mentioned to my mother... Jane, don't you remember grandmama's telling us of it when we got home?[1]

Miss Bates ends with unconscious irony, by praising her niece's discretion, just as she has begun with unconscious irony:

> 'I am not like Jane, I wish I were. I will answer for it. She never betrayed in the least thing in the world.'[2]

Miss Bates is respected by all except Emma, who sees in her a silly, satisfied, smiling, unfastidious chatterer. The reason for this cannot be found in her tediousness and in her silly chatter, because Emma's beloved father and sister are at least equally vapid, if not quite so verbose. Miss Bates admires Emma greatly, but it is always clear to Emma that Jane Fairfax whom she regarded as a threatening rival, holds the first place in Miss Bates' affection, and esteem. Emma is tired of always hearing Miss Bates' talk of Jane and her letters. The sort of admiration

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1.Emma, p.65
2.Ibid, p.66

Miss Bates bestows on Emma-for example, at the Crown ball, " Upon my word Miss Woodhouse, you do look-how do you like Jane's hair?... She did it all herself. Quite wonderful, how she does her hair,"[1] is neither focused enough, nor exclusive enough, to please one who is always so eager to be first. Emma's intention with Miss Bates is unsatisfactory because Miss Bates bestows all her love to Jane. Jane Nardin has accurately remarked:

> Every time Emma sees Miss Bates, some ego deflating reminder of Jane's superior virtues and accomplishments is forced on her against her will.[1]

And probably it is doubly humiliating to Emma that any one so dull as Miss Bates should possess this power to unsettle her. At Box Hill Emma gets a chance to make a curt remark on Miss Bates' habit of dull chatter. Playing a game in which one is invited to say three dull things Miss Bates responds:

> "Three things very dull indeed, that will just do for me, you know, I shall be sure to say three dull things as soon as ever I open my mouth, shan't I?"[2]

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Emma, p.54

1. Nardin Jane, op.cit. p.163

2. Emma, p.75

Emma caught up in the atmosphere in which wit, rather than good feeling or conventional propriety is the most admired quality-makes a witty, but rude and cruel reply:

> "Ah! ma'am but there will be a difficulty. Pardon me- but you will be limited as to number- only three atonce."[1]

Emma is unable to resist an appropriate, indeed, an ideal, opportunity to put down Miss Bates, for Miss Bates has always annoyed her as the tedious and doting aunt of Jane Fairfax. Everytime she has seen Miss Bates she has felt "much had been forced upon her against her will" by Miss Bates' loquacity, and all because of the civility she forces herself to display toward this boring old maid.

But her talk, flowing naturally and untrammelled with the movements of her mind, establishes her simplicity and generosity of heart so effectively that Emma's rude remark to her on Box Hill seems indefensibly brutal and unfair. This incident also illustrates the amiability of the friend whom Emma treats so unkindly, and who yet, far from being angry, reproaches herself for the irritation that she has unwillingly caused. She,

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1. Emma, p.76

is, nevertheless, sensitive enough to feel the pinch of Emma's cruel remark.

Though foolish, she has been betowed with a very good nature. Inclined to think well of all, she criticises no one. She has an artless faith in the good will of her fellow creatures which illumines and adorns the world. Although she is an inveterate and rambling talker, she never utters anything unkind and ungrateful. In fact, she seems genuinely able to see only the good qualities in other people. She admires even the vulgar Mrs.Elton, and is far from guessing the reason of her attentions to Jane. She displays so much gratitude and appreciation to her as the vainest woman could desire. She exclaims:

> 'Stop, stop. Let us stand a little back. Mrs.Elton is going, dear Mrs.Elton, how elegant she looks-beautiful lace! Now we all follow in her train. Quite the queen of the evening.'[1]

She is entirely incapable of guile. It is impossible for her to dissemble successfully and when she is forced to try to do so, as when Emma comes to call Jane, she overhears Miss Bates promising to tell her a fib on Jane's account, the simply kind lady is finally able to say only "My dear", said I, " I shall say you are laid down upon the bad," but however,

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1.Emma, p.65

she is not...".[1] Darrel Mansell reiterates her ingrained simplicity as he remarks:

> She is open and affirmative, and she seems willing to embrace all the world. She makes no demands on it, she has no particular aesthetic vision to which she must bend the facts. What is before her she sees.[2]

In his unsigned review of Emma in the quarterly Review, Walter Scott said that'Characters of folly and simplicity, such as old Woodhouse and Miss Bates, are apt to become tiresome in fiction as in real society.' This statement is not true with the character of Miss Bates. Though comic in her long chatter, she is basically a very interesting, kind, humble and good woman. She belongs to a family which has declined to poverty from former prosperity. She is very poor but she bears her poverty with courage, and is pathetically grateful if someone offers some kindness to her. She is far too genuinely humble to pretend to any false pride in accepting things from those she regards as friends. She is always happy, and not mean like Mrs.Norris. Her confusion derives in part from her kind heartedness, her concern for everyone, and especially for Jane and her mother. Confined to talk, she is debarred from

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1. Emma, p.79
2. Darrell Mansell, op.cit., p.168

doing anything for anyone. She is so affectionate and kind to her old mother that during a dinner she managed to slip not unobserved, ran through the rain in thick shoes to Hartfield, took her old mother home, put her to bed, and returned without disturbing anybody.

Miss Bates of all the spinsters in the novel is the nearest in age and situation to the author. In Miss Bates' character Jane Austen pierces beneath the unattractive exterior, and realises the beauty that lurks concealed. In Miss Austen's day and much later, the elderly spinister was considered as fair game for caricature. Emma, who enjoys most of the advantages lacked by her less fortunate neighbour, is sometimes haunted by the idea that she might herself become one day ' an old maid at last, like Miss Bates.' In Miss Bates Jane Austen nobly honours all unmarried women, who, set aside from the ordinary joys and activities of ~~domes~~ doemtic life, find balm for their hidden wounds in forgetfulness of self. Miss Bates herself, as she comes before us in speech and action, is far from being an indictment of society. She has neither money, nor wit with which she can impress and control the social world of Highbury; but she offers it love, gratitude, and a tranquil, contented frame of mind and receives love and respect in return.

' The whole question of female intelligence and independence seems to be in doubt and even in danger, when it is applied to Harriet Smith in Emma,'[1] remarks Yasmine Gooneratne. Jane Austen introduces her with merely the necessary facts about her birth and origins, and about her very conventional beauty. She was a ' parlour boarder' at Mrs. Goddard's where she had been placed as a pupil several years earlier by her unknown father(a tradesman rich enough to suport her comfortably, and 'decent' enough to remain concealed, since she was his natural daughter). She was seventeen, short plump, good looking, and amiable. Her mental calibre is evident with this remark of the author about her parentage:

> Her (Emma's) first attempts at usefulness were in an endeavour to find out who were the parents; but Harriet could not tell. She was ready to tell everything in her power, but on this subject questions were vain. Emma was obliged to fancy what she liked-but she could never believe that in the same situation she should not have discovered the truth. Harriet had no penetration. She had been

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1. Gooneratne Yasmine, Jane Austen, edit, Robin Mayhead, Cambridge University Press, 1970, p.149

> satisfied to hear and believe just what Mrs. Goddard chose to tell her; and looked no farther.[1]

Jane Austen never tells the reader what Harriet really feels, but only what Emma thinks she must feel. She is not inconveniently shy and not unwilling to talk, but she is not of the pushing kind of girl. Emma takes an immediate liking to this girl and inwardly makes up her mind to set as a kind of guardian for her. As a consequence of this resolution on Emma's part, Harriet becomes a regular and welcome visitor to Hartfield, and a great intimacy is developed between her and Emma. Harriet too feels glad when Emma becomes her patron:

> The happiness of Miss Smith was quite equal to her intentions. Miss Woodhouse was so great a personage in Highbury, that the prospect of the introduction had given as much panic as pleasure-but the humble, grateful, little girl went off with highly gratified feelings, delighted with the affability with which Miss Woodhouse had treated her all the evening and actually shaken hands with her at last![2]

Emma too feels very happy in the companionship of Harriet. Isolated at Hartfield by her father's ill

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1. Emma , p.56
2. Ibid, p.55

health and her own mistaken ideas of social decorum she finds in her ' a valuable addition to her privileges'. Her father also recognises Harriet's val to Emma as Emma's companion.

Before being flattered by Emma Woodhouse's interest in her, she had been very intimate with the Martin family for the last several months. She had been attracted to the young farmer Robert Martin. But Emma's snobbery does not permit her to allow Harriet to continue her attachment to that family. She tries to destroy every shred of respect and admiration felt by Harriet for Martin. She convinces Harriet that the attachment to the Martin family will do her no good so far as her future is concerned. Emma has judged the intellectual poverty of her friend, and succeeds in her effort. Her method in keeping her friend away from Martins is studied and cruel, her sentences being blows aimed successively at Martin's uncouth, clownish appearance, his supposedly inferior status, his tender age, his financial problems, and his poor chances of the uplift in the society. Harriet lacks the resources to withstand or meet such an attack, she does make some feeble effort to defend her attachment to the Martin family, but she is over ruled by Emma with the result that she has to keep away from that family as much as possible.

Her submissive nature is also responsible

for her rejection of Mr.Martin's proposal of marriage to her. If Harriet had not been under Emma's influence, she would certainly have accepted Mr. Martin's proposal in the very beginning. A girl of a little wisdom in her place would have thought herself lucky to become Mr. Martin's wife. Mr. Knightley does not share Emma's high opinion of the beauty and abilities of Harriet and says to Emma:

> "Emma, your infatuation about the girl blinds you. What are Harriet Smith's claims, either of birth, nature or education, to any connection higher than Robert Martin? She is not a sensible girl, nor a girl of any information?"[1]

It is impossible to conceive Harriet as existing entirely independent of Emma. What Harriet is actually like when the two part company at the end only Robert Martin knows. The Harriet who appears in the novel is for the most part Emma's own creation.

Emma sows in Harriet's mind the seeds of an ambition to marry Mr.Elton. Acting on Emma's advice she aspires to the handsome Mr. Elton, though (showing more judgment than Emma), she had doubted whether he would think of proposing to her. When

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1. Emma, p.68

Mr.Elton tells Emma that Harriet was 'a beautiful creature when she came to you, but... the attractions you have added are intimately superior to what she received from nature,'[1] the subject of this studied compliment seems to be Harriet-atleast Emma thinks so. Harriet too cannot penetrate deep in the meaning of his praise. For Harriet's attractions are, of course, a reflection of Emma's, and Mr.Elton's aiming a compliment at Emma through the transparent medium of her friend seems a fine illustration of this. The relationship of Emma and Harriet appears as that of an artist to her lifeless material. Mr. Elton praises how Emma has indeed improved her friend, his words:'skilful has been the hand' give the impression as if he is addressing to a painter. Harriet really begins to believe that Mr. Elton is in love with her and so she begins to dream of getting married to the Vicar. Mr. Elton's repeated and misunderstood praise of Harriet, his enthusiasm for Harriet's portrait painted by Emma, his prompt offer to go to London in order to have the portrait framed- are all regarded by Emma, and therefore by Harriet also, as sure signs that Mr.Elton is in love with Harriet. Consequently, when Mr.Elton proposes marriage to Emma instead of to Harriet, Harriet

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1. Emma, 71

receives a big shock. She suffers a bitter disappointment and intense grief. She did her best to become reconciled to the inevitable outcome of Emma's blunder but thought Mr. Elton as her ideal for a long time.

In the whole story this foolish little creature is guided and controlled by her mentor Emma. Harriet is Emma's creation in another respect too. She has created for her impressionable friend a personality thatis very much like Emma's own. When Frank Churchill commissions Emma to find him a wife, she archly suggests one who has been made 'like myself and the reader is immediately aware who she has in her mind.

After her humiliation by Elton, Harriet misunderstands Mr. Knightley's gesture of kindness towards her and thinks he is in love with her. But this time again there is a big disappointment in store for her. Harriet's hopes are shattered when Mr. Knightley proposes marriage to Emma. She proves to as much of an 'imaginist' as Emma has proved herself in certain other directions.

Emma too realises her mistake. She is tormented by Harriet's plight: 'It really was too much to hope even of Harriet, that she could be in love with more than three men in one year'.[1]

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1. Emma, p.95

Harriet herself must have realised that her real pleasure lies in the union with Martin only. In hi home only there would be the hope of some security, stability, and improvement. She would be placed in the midst of those who loved her, and who had better sense than herself. She would never be led into temptation, nor left alone to find her way out She would be respectable and happy in his home.

G.B.Stern commenting on the suitability of Harriet's marriage to Martin writes:

> Emma and Harriet are the only two of Jane Austen's heroines who, pair off with their equals Emma with Mr. Knightley, Harriet with Mr.Martin.[1]

But Harriet Smith has always retained her attachment to the devoted Martin in spite of Emma's attempts to remould her tastes and heighten her expectations-and in spite of her own admiration for Mr.Knightley. She cannot but accept Martin's second proposal of marriage. W.A.Craik has aptly analysed her responses:

> Harriet is revealed only from what she actually says, and the hesitations, contradiction and tautology which make her obviously amusing and inferior to Emma are also always enlightening; they reveal exactly the mud that never opposes an argument but is never really swayed from

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1.G.B.Stern, op.Cit. p.85

its own original opinion.... The unfinished sentence which reveal her hopelessly muddled thinking are a convenient shorthand which does not muddle the reader in the least.[1]

But she is a gentle, humble, obedient sort of girl who will never say'no' to her guide. She bears her disappointments with unresentful patience and with no grudge against her mentor. She invariably 'submitted, and approved, and was grateful'. She feeds Emma's vanity every hour of the day: " Dear Miss Woodhouse, I would not give up the pleasure and honour of being intimate with you for anything in the world." One reason why Emma selects Harriet rather than Jane Fairfax, as a friend, is simply that Harriet has neither the inclination, nor the ability, to criticise her in the smallest particular. She has less apparent firmness perhaps than any other of Miss Austen's characters. Emma never accords Harriet fully human(or adult) status, always regards her as an object, in fact as a toy! " A Harriet Smith, one whom she could summon at any time to a walk," Harriet's limitations are immediately apparent to the reader.

She does not apply her mind for anything.

1.Craik W.A., Jane Austen, Methuen & Co.LTD, London, p.144

She puts foolish and absurd queries at the charade which Mr.Elton has written:

> 'What can it be, Miss Woodhouse?-what can it be? I have not an idea-I cannot guess it in the least. What can it possibly be? Do try to find it out, Miss Woodhouse. Do help me. I never saw anything so hard. Is it kingdom? I wonder who the friend was-and who could be the young lady! Do you think it is a good one? Can it be a woman?... Can it be Neptune? or a trident?'[1]

In her endeavour to flatter Emma she makes contradictory remarks about her(Emma's) performance of music:

> 'Oh dear- I think you play the best of the two. I think you play quite as well as she does.... Well, I always shall think that you play quite as well as she does, or that if there is any difference no body would ever find it.'[2]

Harriet Smith though less popular than Miss Bates, is almost as fine, in very much the same way. Like Miss Bates she is a constant source of

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1. Emma, p.98
2. Ibid p.240

information which she does not know she possesses. She resembles Lady Bertram in the way she states obvious truths without being at all aware how devastating they are:

> 'I shall always have a great regard for the Miss Martins, especially Elizabeth and should be very sorry to give them up for they are quite as well educated as me.'[1]

She employs Emma to write her refusal to Martin's offer of marriage. Morally she can be easily led into wrong action or into right action. Emotionally, she is a votary of Martin, Elton, Knightley and Martin once again. She is a light haired and blue eyed young thing whom an accident of birth has placed in the neutral region between two social classes, without assured footing or firm poise in either. Commenting on her character O.W.Firkins remarks:

> Harriet Smith is not vulgar, she is not flimsy, she is not missish. She is girlish, School girlish-that is the worst that can be said.[2]

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1. Emma, p.60
2. O.W.Firkins, op.cit, p.114

Mrs.Allen, in Northanger Abbey unlike the Gothic Chaperone is neither wicked nor vigilant. She is a childless mother who invites Catherine to accompany her to Bath. Mrs Allen as Jane Austen takes pains to point out, is a veritable cipher of a woman:

> One of that numerous class of females whose society can raise no other emotion that surprise at their being any men in the world who could like them well enough to marry them.[1]

Put in her case it was not beauty that made her the choice of a sensible intelligent man like Mr.Allen, and we are never given any reason to suppose that she and her husband did not get on very well together: ' She did not possess beauty, manners and genius but the air of a gentle woman, a great deal of quiet, inactive good temper and a trifling turn of mind, were all that could account ø for her being the choice of a sensible, intelligent man, like Mr. Allen![2])

All of Catherine's adventures stem from th e invitation from Mr. and Mrs. Allen, probably with the

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1.Northanger Abbey, p.7

2.Ibid, p.17

awareness that, if adventures will not befall a young lady in her own village, she must seek them abroad.

Mrs. Allen is a conventional comic character, identified by an outstanding trait, a ruling passion. Her trait is a relentless occupation with matters of dress, her own and that of other women. Her idiosyncrasy is revealed in her details of Indian muslin and their cost and quality. With more care for the safety of her new gown for the comfort of her protegee, Mrs. Allen makes her way through the throng of men at Bath, as swiftly as the necessary caution would allow...then she congratulated herself, as soon as the people were seated, on having preserved her gown from injury.

Jane Austen employs her best powers in describing Mrs. Allen or rather in showing that there was nothing in her to describe.

Mrs. Allen the 'indolent duenna' as Linklater calls her is incapable of thinking, and spent much of her time in 'busy idleness'. She resembles Lady Bertram in her indolence, though she is not quite so lethargic, being really interested in questions of fashion. Love of dress and company distinguished her from Lady Bertram in Mansfield Park, who, for her inertness of mind and vapid serenity, might be compared with her.

Mrs. Allen does not have a sense of propriety. She is an anti chaperone, who is unable to instruct, advice and watch her ward. When Catherine, anxious to visit the Tilneys to apologise for not meeting them for their walk, seeks her advice as to the propriety of calling on Miss Tilney, she advises: " Go by all means, my dear, only put on a white gown, Miss Tilney always wears white".[1]

Catherine has come to Bath with only the parody of a chaperone. When she asks for moral advice, all Mrs. Allen can do is to deliver the unimpeachable proposition that young people will be young people. Describing her as a Gothic Chaperone reversed Marvin Mudrick asserts:

> Mrs.Allen, for example, is the Gothic chaperone reversed Mrs.Allen all placid, submerged inertia and unconcern(a less well married Lady Bertram), the Gothic chaperone always deeply concerned, motivated-depending on whether the author needs her for a "good" or a "bad" character-either by anxious propriety or by a busy malevolence.[1]

She performs the special tasks of parody with a domestic setting, and suggests the

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1- Northanger Abbey, p.91

1. Marvin Mudrick, op.cit., p.47-48

corresponding Gothic types by being so different. She does not understand the wretchedness of Isabella and her brother, and when questioned on the propriety of young people driving about the country together in open carriages she responds :' open carriages are nasty things. A clean gown is not five minutes wear in them'.

Mrs. Allen is a comic character revealed by methods Jane Austen uses very often for humorous characters. Whatever their subject, her speeches show certain fundamental characteristics. She consistently confuses important matters with trivial ones, and she never advances the conversation. On one occasion while talking to Catherine about her mother's request to give guidance to Catherine at Bath, she mingles the topic with her purchasing of some dresses. Her over enthusiasm for'muslin' exists in all her thinking and conversation. Mrs. Allen is one of Jane Austen's small triumphs, a delightful portrayal of a stupid woman, like that great triumph Miss Bates but unlike her in that Miss Bates is always unconsciously relevant, while Mrs.Allen is fascinatingly irrelevant.

She creates a comic effect by her repetition that Catherine has not got a partner to dance. Repeating daily her desire to have an acquaintance at Bath, she found a response at last, for

she was addressed by a lady who turned out to be an old Schoolfellow, and was called Mrs.Thropes. Miss Austen gives only a few words to the description of the friendship between her and Mrs. Thropes, but they are very illuminating. Mrs. Allen never satisfied herself unless she met her old friend; and had ' a so called conversation,' but in which there was scarcely over any exchange of opinion, and not often any resemblance of subject. They never talked on a similar subject. Mrs. Thropes always praised her children, Mrs. Allen, who had nothing to talk on this matter, felt concern over her dress. O.W.Firkins has regarded her as very selfish in not fulfilling her duty as Chaperone. She undertakes the duties of a Chaperone with that cheerfulness which is the outgrowth of a complete indifference to their fulfilment. Her stupidity is a pleasure because she is an important commentator on the action, the more effective for being unconscious.

CHAPTER IV

The Mean Egotists

Jane Austen shows an intuitive understanding of human character. Her intuition is so natural supple that it appears absolutely simple. She reads the inner minds of her character as if those minds were transparent. She seizes them in their depths. The secret complexities of self love, the many vanities, the imperceptible quiverings of selfishness are all indicated in her novels. She satirises all those follies and foibles in human nature.

Jane Austen was profoundly moral. She thought one lived only to be good, that it was the first duty of everyone to be sincere, gentle and unselfish.

In the following chapter only those characters are gathered who lack sincerity affection,

and good nature.

Mrs.Bennet in Pride and Prejudice comes in the category of mean characters. Her character illustrates the firmness and sureness of Miss Austen's hand. It is brilliant but at times almost garish.

Mrs. Bennet, the daughter of a country is constantly foolish. Mrs.Jennings is also a foolish woman, but she, sometimes, makes perceptive remarks. But the disease of folly is chronic with Mrs. Bennet. It is steady, persistent and appears incurable. Foolish she was born, and foolish she would die. There is no change, no development in her character. O.W.Firkin has the following to say about the consistency of her silliness:

> Many women have had follies akin to Mrs.Bennet's, but no live woman ever devoted herself to the quite superfluous task of proving that she was a fool with the perseverance and assiduity of Mrs. Bennet. The wariest of fools are off their guard sometimes; they stray into remarks which would be conceivable on the lips of intelligence.[1]

The very first chapter of the novel opens with Mrs. Bennet in the full parade of her

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1.O.W.Firkins, op.cit; p.32

vulgarity, greediness and silliness. She is introduced to us in uncharitable terms:

> She was a woman of mean understanding, little information, and uncertain temper. When she was discontented she fancied herself nervous. The business of her life was to get her daughters married, its solace was visiting and news.[1]

She considers marriage as the sole sin of a maiden. Her own marriage presents a detached comic view of a working, if not ideal or enviable relationship, between a feather brained, humorless and very conventional woman; and a witty but lazy man. In her youth she was probably, like Mrs.Palmer, a lovely girl, whose beauty blinded her admirers to her foolishness, too stupid to realise her deficiencies or to learn by association with a refined and educated man. The consequences of the discovery of the ill effects of an unequal marriage, is the defalcation of all real affection, confidence and respect on the side of Mr.Bennet towards his wife. His views of domestic comfort being overthrown he seeks consolation for a disappointment, which he had brought upon herself, by indulging his fondness for a country life and his love for study.

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1. Pride and Prejudice, p.2

He contrives not to be out of temper with the follies which his wife does and is contended to laugh and be amused with her want of decorum and propriety. In the first chapter when she insists upon him to go and meet Mr.Bingley so that he might get interested in any of her daughters, he amuses himself by giving a mock compliment to her:

> 'I see no occasion for that you and the girls may go, or you may send them by themselves, which perhaps will be still better, for as you are as handsome as any of them. Mr.Bingley might like you the best of the party.'[1]

Mrs.Bennet is such a fool that she takes the 'compliment' seriously:

> My dear you flatter me. I certainly have had my share of beauty, but I do not pretend to be anything extraordinary now. When a woman has five grown up daughters, she ought to give over thinking of her own beauty.'[2]

To a certain extent she is a good mother,

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1. Pride and Prejudice, p.3
2. Ibid, p.2

for at a time when marriage was the only honourable provision for well educated young ladies of little fortune, it was as much her business to secure husbands for her daughters as would be for a father to find suitable professions for his sons. The all important question being what the girls would do if they remained single. The most ordinary maternal affection might well seek to provide them with husbands as an alternative to a life of indigence. The reason of her motive to seek husband for her daughters is analysed by Marvin Mudrick in the following remarks:

> An inadequate mind to begin with, marriage to a man who treats her with contempt only, preoccupation with the insistent material concerns imposed by society upon a woman of her class-they have all combined in Mrs.Bennet's single continuousl operating motive; to be herself secure and comfortable, and to fortify her own security by getting her daughters settled in prudent marriage, that condition symbolic of maternal well being.[1]

She is to be criticised then not so much

1.Mudrick Marvin, op.cit., p.79

for her match making as for her vulgarity, her peevishness and her coarseness. These traits of character are exercised mainly on Jane's prospects of marrying Bingley(who had hired Netherfield Park), her neighbour Mrs. Long and her nieces (no one else ever mentions them), and the entail. Her actions are always consistent with herself, but always surprising because she is constantly irrational. She overflows with premature and exaggerated hopes regarding Jane's chances of marrying Bingley. She establishes her foolishness by her absurd talk after the ball at Netherfield:

> 'Oh! my dear Mr. Bennet...we have had a most delightful evening, a most excellent ball. Jane was so admired,... and Bingley thought her quite beautiful, and danced with her twice. Only think of that my dear, he actually danced with her twice; and she was the only creature in the room that he asked second time.'[1]

She is consistent in her folly, and loses no opportunity of making her daughters blush at her indiscretions. This is perhaps best demonstrated by her visit to Netherfield early in the story,

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1. Pride and Prejudice, p.10

where she makes a complete fool of herself in the presence of Miss Bingley and Mrs. Hurst. They agree heartily with Darcy's dictum that the vulgarity of Mrs. Bennet's must very materially lessen her daughter's chances of marrying men of any consideratio in the world). Her ill breeding and senseless talk become the cause of Jane's misfortunes.

Mrs.Bennet's silliness rises to its height when she wants Elizabeth to accept the marriage proposal of a grotesque, pompous clergyman Mr.Collins. She is very much dismayed to learn about her refusal to Mr. Collins. Collins extends his proposal to Elizabeth's friend Charlotte Lucas and it is promptly accepted. The thought of entailment at once occurs to Mrs. Bennet on hearing the irritating news. A visit from her sister-in-law Mrs.Gardiner gives Mrs.Bennet opportunity for complaint and consolation:

> 'The consequence of it is, that Lady Lucas will have a daughter married before I have, and that Longbourn estate is just as much entailed as ever.... It makes me very nervous and poorly, to be thwarted so in my own family, and to have neighbours who think of themselves before anybody else. However, your coming just at this time is the greatest of comforts, and I am very glad to

hear what you tell us of long sleeves.'[1]

Her ill breeding is a major contributory factor in Lydia's disgraceful elopement. She not only encourages Lydia to visit Maryton soldiers, but herself displays interest in them. Ultimately Lydia runs away with a man who declines marrying her till her friends intervene. No one, save Mrs.Bennet herself, can do justice to her feelings on this occasion. Mr. Bennet is gone to town in search of the fugitives, and his brother-in-law Mr. Gardiner proposes, joining him:

> 'Oh! my dear brother! that is exactly what I could most wish for. And now do, when you get to town, find them out, wherever they may be; and if they are not married already, make them marry. And as for wedding clothes, do not let them wait for that, but tell Lydia she shall have as much money as she chooses to buy them after they are married.'[2]

The emphasis on the wedding clothes at such a disgraceful occurrence, is a felicitous illustration of Mrs. Bennet's incurable absurdity.

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1. Pride and Prejudice, p.53
2. Ibid, p.205

She is not merely silly she has an undiscriminating mind but it cannot be denied that she is irrepressibe and full of life. Her brother is successful in his endeavour, Lydia is married- amd Mrs.Bennet's mind reverts to the wedding clothes with such exultation that her eldest daughter Jane thinks to calm her transports by reminding her that Mr. Gardiner has probably bribed the lover into becoming a husband. Mrs. Bennet's reply reveals how her mind works:

> 'Well, it is all very right, who should do it bu her own uncle? If he had not had a family of hi own, I and my children must have had all his money, you know.'[1]

Her disgusting temperament is combined wit her pride. She considers herself superior to everybody. Having proudly gone to the Maryton Ball in her carriage, she thinks that Darcy did not talk to Mrs. Long there because she does not keep her own carriage. Her views about her close friends and neighbours reveal her proud nature.

She is a snob of the most objectionable kind whose social position is an acquired one and

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1. Pride and Prejudice, p. 210

is not due to the accident of birth. She responds o to flattery, or an opinion that suits her. She hate the very sight of Darcy, probably because he makes her feel small. Mrs. Bennet is happy with those who flatter her, but is frankly rude to anyone who crosses her. This inconsistency of manners is just one more example of her characteristic tendency to judge and react to things entirely as they effect her as an individual, completely disregarding any function they may serve in the world as a whole. Her harsh opinion changes within minutes as the tall, rich Darcy appears as Elizabeth' accepted suitor. Running on in a style that proved she had not even the intelligence to hide her gross sense of values she exclaims:

> 'O! my sweetest Lizzy, how rich and how great you will be! What pin money, what jewels, what carriages, you will have! Oh my dear Lizzy! pray apologize for my having disliked him.'[1]

Reacting sharply to the speech habits of Mrs. Bennet Reuben & Brower remarks:

Mrs. Bennet speaks another language; her talk

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1. Pride and Prejudice, p.299

> does not crackle with irony and epigram, her sentences run in quite another mold. They either go on too long or break up awkwardly in impulsive exclamations, this is the talk of a person of "mean understanding" and "uncertain temper."[1]

G.B.Stern has rightly stated that she is the worst mother in Jane Austen. She does not have a single redeeming feature.

The most egregious example of the combined intellectual and emotional obtuseness in Jane Austen' novels is Mary Bennet of 'Pride and Prejudice' who, esteems herself as the 'intellectual' of the family, and whose intellectualism displays in ludicrous exhibition.

Mary one of the younger daughters of Mr. ar Mrs. Bennet, is a stupid, entertaining and vain figure. She is a bore, and a literary snob in the burlesque style. On every occasion, whatever the situation, serious or funny, she gives long lecture: One can, however, enjoy her pompous language. She

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1.Brower A Reuben, 'Light and Bright and Sparkling' Jane Austen, edit. Ian Watt, op.cit,p.65

gives speeches without a thought for relevance or propriety. Her father remarks about her in the beginning of the novel:

> "You are a young lady of deep reflection I know, and read great books and make extracts."[1]

In reply she wished to say something very sensible, but knew not how. Her father mockingly comments:

> 'While Mary is adjusting her ideas, let us return to Mr. Bingley.'[2]

Mary is a voracious reader of great books without knowing and understanding much. Brigid Brophy sees Mary as an example of what Jane Austen did not expect an educated person to be:

> Darcy insists that a woman cannot become accomplished without undertaking 'extensive reading'. And the positive programme is counterpointed, a little crudely, throughout th book by Mary Bennet, who keeps delivering an object lesson in the kind of unimaginative sententiousness which Jane Austen did not mean by education.[3]

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1. Pride and Prejudice, p.5
2. Ibid, p.5
3. Brophy Brigid, ' Jane Austen and the Stuarts', Critical Essays on Jane Austen, edit. B.C. Southam Routledge & Kegan Paul, London, 1970, p.33

Her bookishness is remote from life. She is an awful example of feminine pretensions to learning. Her affection of learning makes conversation a source of entertainment to the reader, though it bores her listeners. On one occasion when Elizabeth has a very valid reason for wishing to go to Netherfield(where Jane had fallen ill), she has to go in the rainy season on foot; as there ~~is~~ are no other means of reaching there except this. Mary, on the contrary reveals the fact that she completely fails to understand the demands of Elizabeth's love for Jane. She can only deliver this bookish extract:

> Every impulse of feeling should be guided by reason... exertion should always be in proportion to what is required.[1]

She has neither genius, nor taste. She is a stupid character. Though plain and pedantic, she has little reason to be vain, yet she is a snob. Her vanity makes her more eager than her sister Elizabeth to play the piano at Netherfield. Her eagerness to display, what she has laboriously acquired, contributes to Elizabeth's sense of shame at her family's behaviour, besides helping to

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1.Pride and Prejudice, p.13

confirm the contempt in which they are all held by Mr. Darcy.

Yet what Mary has to say is, sometimes, very much to the point. Her preaching on pride is an illustration amplified in a Lucas-Bennet roun table discussion. Charlotte Lucas proposes that Darcy ' has a right to be proud' the right of character, status, and fortune. Elizabeth on the other hand, 'could forgive his pride if he had not mortified mine'. Mary picks this up and articulates it formally in a little essay which she contributes, pedantically but by no means stupidly:

> Pride is a very common failing I believe. By all that I have ever read, I am convinced that it is very common indeed, that human nature is particularly prone to it, and that there are very few of us who do not cherish the feeling of self complacency on the score of some quality or other, real or imaginary. Vanity and pride are different things, though the words are often used synonimously.[1]

Mary Bennet is remembered as a comic character, the only one among the five Bennet girls

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1.Pride and Prejudice, p.16

who might have been persuaded to accept Mr. Collins. Mary herself rated Mr.Collins's abilities highly (a reflection that immediately does away with any claims she might have had to seriousness or good sense). Mrs. Bennet therefore had reason to suppose that his return to Longbourn might be to propose to Mary. Jane Austen remarks that Mary could do no better than marry one of Mr.Philips's clerks, and was content to shine in the society of Meryton.

Although her appearances are but few in the course of the novel, she never appears without 'contributing in a positive way to its pattern.' Her remarks on vanity help the plot along, and her personality defines by contrast the characters of her livelier, more attractive sisters. She is in her own way as much a bore as her mother.

Lady Catherine De Borough is also something of a caricature. She is proud and mean lady.

The chief quality of these caricatures is that they are proper targets of laughter, even if we are inclined to condemn them. The laughter implies that they do not matter much. But sometimes they become real menace to the heroines. For example,

while Elizabeth Bennet sees Mr.Collins with disdain and amusement our view of him as a caricature is not different from hers. When, however, he proposes, and Mrs.Bennet's urgent pressure turns the proposal into a genuine threat, we have to recognise that although he remains a joke for us, he is no longer one for Elizabeth. The same applies to Lady Catherine and Elizabeth. Lady Catherine in the shrubbery, forbidding Elizabeth to become engaged to Darcy, touches the heights of caricature for us. However for Elizabeth, she is not merely a funny figure but a real threat.

Lady Catherine is a fit patron for Mr.Collins. By introducing her through a fool, like Mr.Collins, Jane Austen not only saves herself from introducing her but actually presents her more effectively through Mr. Collins. We get much information about her before she appears in person. Collins continuously eulogises her (during her visit to Longbourn) that he has never in his life witnessed such behaviour in a person of rank and wealth, such affability and condescension, as he had experienced from this lady. He treats his patroness, with the awed adoration that others reserve for a deity. Discussing her with Elizabeth, he is on one occasion so moved that words fail him and he 'obliged to walk about the room' in an effort to regain self control.

It is a sad reflection on Lady Catherine's self esteem that she requires, and can tolerate a flatterer so obvious and foolish as Mr. Collins, the very apotheosis of the sycophant. He recalls to Elizabeth his flattery of Lady Catherine:

> 'These are the kind of little things which please her ladyship, and it is a sort of attention which I conceive myself peculiarly bound to pay.'[1]

Being an arrogant and domineering lady, she delights in interfering and preaching others. She advises Mr.Collins to marry as soon as possible but with discretion. After Collin's marriage with Charlotte Lucas, she delights in inquiry as to the private affairs of her acquaintance:

> She enquired into Charlotte's domestic concerns familiarly and minutely, and gave her a great deal of advice, as to the management of them all; told her how everything ought to be regulated in so small a family as her's, and instructed her as to the ca e of her cows and her poultry.[2]

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1. Pride and Prejudice, p.60
2. Ibid p.146

Lady Catherine is an extension of Darcy's pride to the limits of caricature. She has all his pride of family and position plus an unfailing sense of her own personal superiority. " You know I always speak my mind". " I cannot bear and I have the greatest dislike... to that sort of things", are the common utterances of her.

Manners were cruder in Miss Austen's times, depicted also in Miss Burney's and Miss Edgeworth's novels. Educated and rich women often spoke with great freedom. Lady Catherine also assumes that her wealth and position justified extreme licence of speech On one occasion she says about the practice of Elizabeth's music:

> 'I have often told her to come to Rosings every day, and play on the piano forte in Mrs.Jenkinson's (servant) room. She would be in nobody's way, you know in that part of the house.'[1]

Mr. Collins provides a chance for Elizabeth to come to Hansford and observe this amusing lady. Elizabeth is not overwhelmed by the grandeur of the house, nor bullied by the arrogant talk of Lady Catherine:

> Her courage did not fail her. She had heard

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1. Pride and Prejudice, p.154

> nothing of Lady Catherine that spoke her awful from an extraordinary talents or miraculous virtue, and the mere stateliness of money and rank she thought she could witness without trepidation.[1]

Lady Catherine has perception enough to miss in Elizabeth the alarm and the flattering obsequiousness she is used to inspiring in her social inferiors. Elizabeth's refusal to confirm and to defer unquestioningly to her will spell danger to the values that hold Lady Catherine's world of rank and wealth together, danger, that is,if Elizabeth is allowed to go on in this shocking way and to succeed in it. Her distatorial and condescending manner towards those whom she considers socially inferior reveals her pride of rank as well as the fact that she is not interested in judging people by their inherent worth.

Her following conversation with Elizabeth reveals her stupid nature in league with her pride:

> " Do your sisters play and sing?"
>
> " One of them does".
>
> " Why did not you all learnt. You ought all

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1. Pride and Prejudice, p.147

> to have learned. The Miss Webbes all play, and their father has no so good an income as yours..."
>
> " We never had any governess!;
>
> " How was that possible? Five daughters brought up at home without a governess! I never heard of such a thing. Your mother must have been quite a slave to your education[1]".

Collins' information about Darcy and Elizabeth's engagement is enough to infuriate her. Being intolerable, overbearing and interfering, she exploits her aunthood even to the extent of visiting Elizabeth Bennet. She becomes abusive as any fishwife, informing her that a match with her nephew " to which you have the presumption to aspire, can never take place-no, never. Mr. Darcy is engaged to my daughter. Now what have you to say?" She insults Elizabeth on her low connections, the business of her uncle Gardiner, and the shameful elopement of Lydia with Wickham. She calls her selfish and unfeeling, one who is determined to ruin Darcy in the opinion of all his friends and make him the contempt of the world. Elizabeth refuses her demand to promise not to become engaged to Darcy.

Being a fool, Lady Catherine does not know that she is becoming a means of uniting Darcy and Elizabeth by her infuriated visit. She provokes

Elizabeth into asserting her own independence of spirit, even to the point of impertinence. In her arrogant effort to dissuade Elizabeth from accepting Darcy, she gives her the opportunity to set her own proud value upon herself as an individual. Then, out of foolishness, she angrily brings the news to Darcy encouraging him unconsciously to believe that Elizabeth may not refuse him a second time. Elizabeth and Darcy are indebted for their present good understanding to the efforts of Darcy's aunt.

Through her foolish acts, she is useful to the story, but only in ways she is unaware of ~~the~~ and would repudiate with outrage if she knew of them. By her insulting condescension towards Elizabeth, she helps Darcy to balance off his distate for Mrs.Bennet's not dissimilar shortcomings. They have been brought down into the same family. Darcy will have Mrs.Bennet to converse with during the long evenings at Christmas, and Elizabeth will have the similar consolation of Lady Catherine's company. Elizabeth's shame at her mother's silly behaviour in Darcy's presence finally has had its counterpart in Darcy's shame at his aunt's ill breeding.[1]

Jane Austen has not protrayed the lady devoid of all goodness. She has been bestowed some

good qualities also. Her interest in her nephew does not spring entirely from motives of snobbery. She seemed quite genuinely fond of him. And in the last Chapter after a long interval:

> ... her resentment gave way, either to her affection for him, or her curiosity to see how his wife conducted herself,... and she condescended to wait on them at Pemberley in spite of that pollution which its woods had received, not merely from the presence of such a mistress, but the visit of her uncle and aunt from the city.[1]

She is also an affectionate mother full of anxiety about the health of her daughter Anne. Anne is a pale and sick girl, we feel sympathy towards her mother, as she quite often repeats the sentence: "Anne would have been a delightful performer, had her health allowed her to learn". G.B.Stern in an article on Jane Austen remarks:

> How surprising that the formidable Lady Catherine can be slipped into our Dottage Collection, but most of these dragon ladies have their weak spot tucked away under the scales, and Lady Catherine ceases to be a dragon

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1.Pride and Prejudice, p.328

when she refers to her daughter her only child, Ane de Bourgh.[2]

Though tinged with pride and a sense of superiority, she is hospitable to her guests. She quite often invites the Collins to her house. Elizabeth was invited twice during her visit at Hunsford. Her house is always ready for the guests. At the time of their departure from Rosings she, with great condescension, wishes them a good journey, and invites them to come to her home town again next year.

She was also helpful to her country folk, though she was not in the commission of the peace for the country, she was a most attentive magistrate. Whenever any Cottager had a trouble or some quarrel, she sallied forth into the village to settle their differences, silence complaints, and scold them into harmony and plenty.

Mrs. Norris of Mansfield Park comes in Lady Catherine's category in the sense that she, sometimes, becomes a real threat to Fanny Price. But

1. G.B.Stern, More talk of Jane Austen, Putter and Tanner, Great Briton, 1950, p.88

she, who is often regarded as providing comic relief in a sombre novel, is no simple a caricature, but a psychotic creation. She is a complex and interesting creature that bears the marks of close and accurate observation.

The three Miss Wards(the eldest one known as Mrs.Norris) are a powerful organising force. They embody the theme of the effect of environment and upbringing on character. Mrs.Norris is the most striking among all the three. She enters the novel on its very first page, as 'Miss Ward' lucky Lady Bertram's éolder and less fortunate sister, who is 'obliged to be attached to the Rev.Mr.Norris.... and Mr. and Mrs.Norris began their career of conjugal felicity with very little less than a thousand a year.' Her husband was a friend of Sir Thomas, to whom he was indebted for his Mansfield living. 'Obliged to be attached' shows that affection is not in question, and cliche 'conjugal felicity'- suspect in itself- is neatly tied to that chief source of Mrs.Norris's felicity, money, a thousand a year.'

When she was widowed, she took the White Cottage in the village because it was too small to accommodate visitors. As a result of her tactful nature, and Lady Bertram's lethargy, she shifts to

Mansfield Park and acquires the duties which would ordinarily have been her sister's.

Jane Austen has presented her in an ironic spirit, though she enjoys full authority at Mansfield Park, deputising for a younger sister is a constant reminder of her own inferior status. Her discontent manifests itself in her selfish meddling and in her show of anger. Margaret Kennedy has seen her as a negative character:

> Mrs. Norris is the most odious in all the novels. She is the worst kind of poor relation, fawning on the family, borrowing all the consequences she can from the connection, bullying servants, seething with frustrated egotism, and forever drawing attention to herself.[1]

When Sir Thomas fixed the ball without consulting her, she established her importance in another way. She required some minutes' silence to be settled into composure.

> "A ball at such a time! His daughter absent and herself not consulted". There was comfort, however, soon at hand. She must be the doer of everything.... and this reflection quickly restored so much of her good humour as enable her to join in with

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1.Margret Kennedy, Jane Austen, Edit.Arthur Barker, Lowe & Brydone Printers, London,1966, p.75

the others, before their happiness and thanks were all expressed.[1]

Her discontent with her poverty and inferiority to her elder sister manifests itself in a spirit of angry activity, aimed at securing the satisfactions of which she considers herself to have been cheated. It is this selfishness that implies her to call Sir Thomas' attention to her own good management of his wife's proper duties, to her harsh treatment towards Park servants and their families.

She is superficially very different from her two sisters, having neither the security of Lady Bertram's wealth, nor Mrs. Price's calm acceptance of comparative poverty. She is obsessed by economy. With comfortable means and no family she has but insufficient scope for her economical spirit and her energetic mind. She, therefore, treats the small economies which would have been praiseworthy in a woman with a narrow income and many children as an end in themselves, and insincerely persuading herself that they are for others. The acquisition of pheasants' eggs or a green baize curtain can bring her happiness. Dr. Grant's taste for a good table dismays her. In her day at the parsonage

the consumption of butter and eggs was not so profligate. She carries thrift to extremes. This feature of her miserly nature, appears to be comic and brings to mind Lady Catherine de Bourgh's interest in Charlotte's over large joints of meat in Pride and Prejudice. The description of Mrs.Price's slatternly house keeping gives rise to the reflection that if Mrs. Norris had been in her sister's place ' she would have been a more respectable mother of nine children on a small income'. David Cecil thinks that Jane Austen has given Mrs.Norris her due though she is not a liteable character:

> Jane Austen is equally honest about the character she did not like. She watched Mrs. Norris who could do otherwise?- and thought her far more odious than harmless silly Mr. Price. But she sees that the same meddling energy which made her so disagreeable would have fitted her far better than Mrs.Price to cope with the difficulties of a poor sailor's wife with a large family.[1]

Mrs. Norris is always ready to exercise any power that properly belongs to her sister. She has also a fancy for directing and ordering the people about. Her love of money is equal to her love of bossing over people. Both are seen in her suggestion that Fanny should be taken off her mother's hands.

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1.Cecil David, op.cit., p.113

Sir Thomas presumed that this latest charitable notion seeming to outdo everything so far done for the Prices- given by himself- is prompted by his sister in law's natural desire for a child. He expects that she will be eager to take over entirely, or at least claim a share in the care of Fanny. But he was completely mistaken. Mrs.Norris needs a whipping boy, a dependant like herself, at Mansfield, who is never be able to hit back. That is why she has contrived this scheme, in the guise to help her poor sister. (otherwise for eleven years the older sister had no concourse with Mrs.Price). The break is made by Sir Thomas at Mrs.Norris's instigation. This is the reason why she wants to keep Fanny at Mansfield. She wants somebody at the Park on whom she can turn whenever the Bertrams humiliate her. She treats Fanny with contempt. " Remember who and what you are"are her daily words for her. On one occasion when Sir Thomas praises Fanny's decided beauty she exclaims:

> (' Look well! Oh yes! she has good reason to look well with all her advantages: brought up in this family as she has been, with all the benefit of her cousin's manners before ~~xxxx~~ her. Only think, my dear sir Thomas, what extraordinary advantages you and I have been the means of giving her.' [1])

1.Mansfield Park, p.53

On Fanny she can work off all her secret rancour and jealousy of the sister who married a baronet, and the sister who married for love. She exploits and humiliates Fanny with a moral justification for such treatment that it is prescribed by Sir Thomas for her niece. She presents Fanny before Sir Thomas in this way:

> 'It is all her fault.... but there is something about Fanny, I have often observed it before-she likes to go her own way to work, she does not like to be dictated to, she takes her own independent walk whenever she can, she certainly has a little spirit of secrecy and independence and nonsense, about her, which I would advise her to get the better of.'[1]

Mrs. Norris is always a figure fit to be what she becomes when Sir Thomas is away, his deputy, the person with the greatest nominal authority, who contributes to the moral chaos by indulging her wealthier nieces to excess. She is represented as really devoted to Maria and Julia. She not only showed affection to them but flattered them, and has no objection to the performance of a play. Though her flattery, she

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1. Mansfield Park, p.127

is a party to their family upbringing. The young people like the Crawfords and Bertrams are somewhat better off than Mrs. Norris in the way they go about making moral judgments. Like her they also have no principles to guide them and hence their feelings are very important in determining what decisions they make, but unlike Mrs. Norris they try at least on occasion to judge men and women as they are. They may often be wrong, but the fact that they make the attempt keeps them more in touch with reality than their aunt. When Tom wants to act, and Sir Thomas returns unexpectedly, the former finds that " his heart is 'sinking under some degree of self condemnation...' suggesting " What will become of us? What is to be done now?" Mrs. Norris equally culpable feels no such alarm, and is totally severed from reality.

She is the most persistent and most rasping of the flatterers, and it is a measure of Sir Thomas Bertram's vanity and lack of perception that he is taken in by her:

> 'My dear Sir Thomas, I perfectly comprehend you, and do justice to the generosity and delicacy of your notions, which indeed are quite of a piece with your general conduct.....[1]

1.Mansfield Park, p.75

She is full of triumph when she has engineered the engagement of her beautiful, high spirited niece to a dull and a wealthy suitor. She is so stupid and insensitive that she does not realise Mr.Rushworth's real worth. He is in no way a match to Maria, but Mrs.Norris totally lacks practical judgment as a basis upon which she can make her choice. She has no idea of what the world around her is really like. She has created a world of imagination in which people correspond to what she wishes them to be-and this really has nothing to do with what they are. Her ill judged and selfish nature obscured the consequences of this ill matched marriage. It blinded her to everything but the value of the part she had played. She took to herself all the credit of bringing Mr. Rushworth's admiration of Maria to any effect:

> 'If I had not been active and made a point of being introduced to his mother, and then prevailed on my sister to pay the first visit I am as certain as I sit here, that nothing would have come of it.'[1]

She consciously and irresponsibly ignores the growing friendship between Henry Crawford and Maria. When Rushworth considers

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1.Mansfield Park, p.80

modernising the grounds of his estate Sotherton, Mrs. Norris arranges a party so that the other young people can proffer advice in the matter. Robert Liddell is of the view that Mrs. Norris has something also in her mind:

> Mrs. Norris, as if reading in her two nieces' minds their little approbation of a plan which was to take Mr. Crawford away' (her ill judged indulgence of them has almost turned her into respectable bawd) suggests a family party.[1]

Her whole scheme turns out a most prodigious failure, when her niece now Mrs.Rushworth elopes with Henry. The prosperity and happiness that she has planned prove nothing but a delusion. Mrs. Norris is stupefied, but inclined to blame Fanny's refusal of Crawford for their troubles.

When Maria is forsaken by everyone, Mrs. Norris covers her with her mantle and follows her into exile. Looking at the action from her point of view, we cannot but admit that it gives a redeeming touch of grace, almost of pathos to her portrait. Her distress is emphasised, and we are forced to pity a character we would gladly despise. Kingsley Amis has noted:

> It must be said at once that the book succeeds

1.Liddell Robert The Novels of Jane Austen, Longmans, Green and Co. Ltd, London,1963, p.74

> brilliantly whenever it aims to hold up viciousness of character as vicious. Mrs.Norris is very fully visualised in domestic and social terms, but these are the lineaments of a moral repulsiveness, and it is a superb, if unintentional stroke of moral irony whereby she alone shows charity towards the disgraced and excommunicated Maria.[1]

Her departure from Mansfield Park was the great supplementry comfort to Sir Thomas who has now realised her character completely:

> To be relieved from her, therefore, was so great a felicity that had she not left better remembrances behind her, there might have been danger of his learning almost to approve the evil which produced such a good.[2]

Her sufferings, as Fanny rises in Mansfield's esteem and attracts the attention formerly paid to her cousins, is a more obvious source of bitter comedy. Though the rest of her life was devoted to the thankless care of Maria, it is no doubt a fair retribution for her harsh treatment of her

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1. Kingsley Amis' 'What became of Jane Austen', Jane Austen, edit.Ian Watt, op.cit., p.142

2. Mansfield Park, p.343

virtuous niece Fanny. It is a punishment that we cannot laugh at. She is affected by the down fall of her beloved Maria, and is an 'altered creature, quieted, stupied, indifferent to everything that passed'. Her sense of values may have been corrected. Her love for Maria introduces the selfish and embittered Mrs. Norris to the discipline of real suffering. It is, however, difficult to imagine that she and Maria will achieve a happy existence together. G.B.Stern in his interesting article ' Seven Y years later' describes the relationship of Maria and her aunt Norris (after seven years of finishing the novel) and the latter's aspiration to be the guiding spirit again of all concerned at Mansfield Park. She complains against the tantrums of Maria:

> Sister, I trust that I am the least to be unsympathetic, and had Maria been really ill and not merely the victim of her own temper which as you know produces in appearance very much the same effect, I should not have nursed her day and night. That she should hav e grown a great deal thinner is only natural considering the mortification with which she heard of Mr.Rushworth's second marriage.[1]

1.Stern G.B., op.cit; p.118

Mrs. Norris is perhaps Jane Austen's most unpleasant character. Her punishment has been delayed until it can make no appreciable difference to her, nor to anyone else any real good. Nevertheless she is one of Jane Austen's most striking creations. She is presented by the same methods as the farcical characters in the other novels, but we are not allowed to dissociate ourselves from her as we do from Lady Catherine or Mrs. Elton, for unlike both of these; she has a personality strong enough to influence so right thinking a man as Sir Thomas. Mrs. Elton never deludes anyone, and Lady Catherine cannot influence even her own nephew Darcy, but Mrs. Norris easily does away with very sensible objections to adopting Fanny, by a mixture of flattery and verbosity.

In Mary Crawford of Mansfield Park, Jane Austen's power of making young womanhood fascinating, and bewitching has been concentrated. Mary is a pretty, vivacious and amusing girl who lets in a little fresh air on the heavy conventions. Half sister of Mrs. Grant, she had grown up in the dubious care of her ill mated uncle and aunt, Admiral Crawford and his wife. Her uncle after his

wife's death had installed his mistress in his house and thereby occasioned Mary Crawford's coming to Mansfield. The arrival of these good tempered and smart brother and sister transforms the atmosphere at Mansfield Park where the equally well bred young people are sunk in selfishness and crossness.

Young people of fortune, with or without engaging manners, are common enough in the Austen world, but the two Crawfords are novel and special figures. They are two of the most important characters of all in Mansfield Park. They contrast with the Bertram family to show the kind of power they have over the Bertrams.

Jane Austen, in this novel, has stressed on the importance of education and breeding. Mary like her brother Henry is a talented and intelligent girl, but these basically good qualities have been turned upon unsatisfactory and useless pursuits, and made them corrupt. Jane Austen has taken a different view point in this novel, that feelings and talents must be employed and if society fails to provide proper opportunities, they will probably employ themselves in pursuits of a highly dangerous nature. Healthy vocational pursuits will create a sense of duty and responsibility in the

youthful.

In Sense and Sensibility, Marianne and Elinor, though they live in the same enforced idleness, turn their leisure into an admirable work. Elinor's art and Marianne's music, for example, show their ability to use leisure well. Mary's case was different from theirs. She did not have opportunity to employ her talents in good pursuits. Matrimony was her primary object, provided she could marry to 'advantage'. From her friends in London, she derived the view that marriage was a 'manoeuvring' business' and most people were'taken in' by it; for her the best ~~receipt~~ recipe for happiness was a large income.

Mary Crawford is very pretty, and good natured. There is a real family feeling and affection between her and Henry, and their half sister. There is no such affinity and love between Maria and Julia or Tom or Edmund. In many ways Henry and Mary love each other as affectionately as Fanny and William do. They seem equally devoted, but Henry's selfishness has already shown itself in a refusal to give Mary a settled home, as he easily could have done at Everingham. This is a typical of his attitude towards his sister. The important thing is that Mary does not realise this. Being

herself selfish and emancipated, she gives no much importance to it. Her affection for him is more disinterested. She talks of 'Henry who is in every other respect exactly what a brother should be, who loves me consults me, and will talk to me by the hour together....' Edmund praises her affections. But Fanny's comments weigh when she says:

> I cannot rate so very highly the love or good nature of a brother who will not give himself the trouble of writing anything worth reading to his sister, when they are separated.[1]

Mary's ill bred nature makes herself feel most important. Her brother always comes first in her affection, but not before herself, though before anyone else. Fanny remarks with bitterness about this aspect: " She loves no one but her brother." The fashionable world of London has negatively influenced Mary, and has brought superficiality in her manner. She bases her judgment upon appearance and wealth. Deception, according to her, is the rule rather than the exception in social exchanges and in marriage especially. It is her tacit consent to this rule,

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1. Mansfield Park, p.56

and her acceptance of it, as a guiding principle that make her a symbol of a dangerous tendency.

Mary Crawford came reluctantly to Mansfield, fearing the boredom of rusticity, but she is pleasantly surprised by the families of both the parsonage and the Park. Within three hours of her arrival, Mrs. Grant unfolds her plan that her sister should marry Tom Bertram, since a baronet's heir is " not too good for a girl of twenty thousand pounds." Mary is ready to like Tom Bertram. But she is no idealist. She so vehemently assails marriage as a universal cheat that Mrs. Grant had to criticise her bad training in the Admiral's house. These early exchanges forecast much of the future. Thrown together in idleness and affluence, the Bertrams and Crawfords make love. Mary Crawford was divided in her aspirations. Matrimony was her primary object, but it should be supplied with wealth. If Tom Bertram should be hard to catch, his brother Edmund might come into consideration. Her beauty and gaiety become a trap for Edmund, and he is fascinated by her free and vivacious conversation, an invitation to indulgence and error.

Mary becomes Fanny's natural counterweight in his love affair. Though, on the level of charm,

there is no contest. Mary is poised, witty, a woman of the urban world, at ease among men and women, free to introduce her own liveliness into any company. Fanny has nothing but to watch painfully Edmund's attention to the lively Mary Crawford. Fanny suffers from what appears to be a growing understanding between Mary and Edmund, But Mary has a wisdom of heart, which results, at times, in great beauty of behaviour. She is always very sympathetic towards her rival Fanny. Mrs.Norris snubbed Fanny cruelly for her unwillingness to take part in the play, ' Edmund was too angry to speak' and it was Mary who soothed her with a 'kind of low whisper' and protected her from further molestation.

Mary, however, is angered by the assured approach of Edward's ordination. In the letter in which Jane Austen tells of having received the first copies of Pride and Prejudice, she says, " Now I will try and write something else, and it shall be complete change of subject-ordination."

The question of ordination is of essential importance to the novel. Mary being against the Clergyman tries to refrain her lover from being a Clergyman. Mary's determined attempts to shake his intention by a combination of charm and raillery make her a source of moral danger to Edmund. She

had been thinking seriously of him and believed she had more influence with him. She had more than once made clear her desire for wealth and position. Mary is a child of the fashionable world, and it is to her love of London and its false values that has shaped her bent of mind.

The matter of man's profession was of peculiar importance to Jane Austen. It weighs heavily against Mr.Bennet, that, his estate being entailed, he has made no effort to secure his family against his death. He is represented as being not only less of a man, but also as less of a gentleman than is brother in law Gardiner who is in trade in London. Jane Austen's feeling about men in relation to their profession reaches its highest intensity in Persuasion, when Mrs.Clay flatters Mr.Elliot that every profession leaves a mark on a man's face, according to his work. According to her a true gentleman will avoid to put this injury to his face.

Mary Crawford's standards about Edmund's profession are also inadequate and false. While discussing the social position of the Clergyman, she remarks,' the metropolis, I imagine, is a pretty fair example of the rest.'[1] To her, every Clergyman is the Mr.Collins of Pride and Prejudice, she thinks of ordination as a surrender

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1.Mansfield Park, p.120

of manhood. At Sotherton, she rails pleasantly at the old rigorous customs of Church Service, making Fanny angry. Religion attracts her arrows though never directly. She attacks its outward form of authority as she tries to dissuade Edmund:

> ...Indolence and love of ease... make men Clergymen. A Clergyman has nothing to do but to to be solvenly and selfish-read the newspaper, watch the weather and quarrel with his wife.[1]

Halevy's History of England in the Nineteenth century gives many reason for the low status of ministers in the Church, enough to show that Mary Crawford's contempt for the Clergy was a common and sustainable view, however, distorted. In Sense and Sensibility, Edward Ferras mentions that he wished to become a minister, but that the profession was not smart enough for his family. And his brother Robert laughs most immoderately, at the vision of Edward ' regarding prayers in a white surplice, and publishing the banners of marriage between John Smith and Mary Brown.

Mary Crawford declines of marriage to Edmund unless he gives up his ordination. Mary's

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1.Mansfield Park, p.125

views, in a way, signify the author's contempt for the vulgar and ill tempered priest. Mary says about her brother in law:

> ... though Dr. Grant is most kind and obliging to me, and though he is really a gentleman, ... I see him to be an indolent selfish born vivant, who must have his palate consulted in everything, who will not stir a finger for the convenience of any one....[1]

Jane Austen has stressed on 'Truth' in personal relations. The two great temptations which cross the path of truth in Jane Austen's fiction are'Charm' and 'Selfishness'. Edmund is fascinated by Mary's Charm, and to be her husband is one of his ambitions. Fanny has refrained from doing anything to influence Edmund against Mary Crawford. She believes Mary to be almost as corrupt as her brother Henry, but she is convinced, too, that Edmund's recognition of Mary's worthlessness, if it ever comes, must come from within himself.

Although Mary is intelligent, she is wilfully perverse in a way Elizabeth Bennet never is in the face of inescapable truth. Her language if often such as Jane Austen has only used for really vulgar persons. 'A horrible flirt', ' very detestable', and her foolish puns such as

the notable ones on 'Rears and Vices' recall Isabella Thorpe rather than Elizabeth Bennet, and anticipate Mrs. Elton, rather than Emma. Once Mary begins to talk about her London friends, her sincerety and wisdom vanish. Her utterances recall Lydia Bennet's:

> 'Mrs. Fraser has been my intimate friend for years. But I have not the least inclination to go near her.... .'[1]

Her faulty upbringing has made her unkind and cynical about authority. Having been brought by her uncle the Admiral, she has heard enough of officer politics and rivalry to mock at the whole fabric of uniformed authority:

> '... of various admirals I could tell you a great deal of them and their flags, and the traditions of their navy, and their bickerings and jealousies.'[2]

Being a victim of a faulty upbringing, she does not see any harm in the suggestion of the play, brought up by Mr.Yates, a friend of Tom's. She is

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1.Mansfield Park, p.125

2. Ibid p.130

ready to do anything to corner any part. It is no responsibility of hers if the play-scheme has any impropriety on the score of Maria's engagement and Sir Thomas' certain disapproval. Perhaps the earliest and strongest hint of Mary's character comes in Chapter 6 at Mansfield, when she demands a cart to bring her harp from Northampton, and cannot under stand the conditions of rural life which make this demand particularly unwelcome at harvest time.

Edmund,who had been under the spell of Mary's Charm finally grasps her true character. He has ~~has~~ proposed to her, because in London he found in her the reflection of her mercenary, ambitions, cold hearted friends. Yet he cannot give up the only woman in the world whom he could ever think of as a wife.

Henry's choice after Maria's marriage with Mr.Rushworth takes a new turn. Fanny has grown attractive in appearance, and Henry wants to make her in love with him. Mary's initial surprise gives place to real satisfaction in the prospect for both: " To have seen you grow like the Admiral... would have broken my heart". This is the only time Mary questions the way of her world but later when

Henry behaves like the Admiral she remains peaceful.

Henry wants to meet the Rushworths again, with his ill designs. Mary does not dissuade him from this attempt. Her fatal flaw is her preoccupation with wealth and position. Having found herself unable, to her surprise, to prefer the heir to estate, she can rejoice in the likelihood of his demise. When Tom Bertram is brought home from New Market with a serious fever, Mary expressed her desire about the consequent elevation of Edmund in her letter to Fanny.

Worse was to come. Henry went to Richmond, where he eloped with Mrs.Rushworth. Mary's attitude towards this hineous incident completely disillusioned Edmund. He told Fanny:

> ' She saw it only as folly, and that folly stamped only by exposure'.[1]

She believed that if they had not been exposed, they would again have settled smoothly in their life.

Jane Austen has, in Mansfield Park, suggested that polite and fashionable society has, as a whole, a corrupt standard of decorum.

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1. Mansfield Park, p.220

In this novel, more than in any of the earlier novels, a devastating attack is made upon the standards of propriety current in fashionable society. The author stresses that manners must, at all times, express moral commitment; and moral commitment in the Crawfords' London world is unfashionable and inelegant. Mary's behaviour proves that her thinking has no moral values, no strict rules governing truly respectful behaviour to parents, and loyalty to a fiance, or straight forwardness in the matter of Courtship. Ultimately, when Mary Crawford tells Edmund that though his sister Maria has committed adultery with Henry Crawford, and if the two marry, polite society will accept them, we realise that even the major rules of propriety governing the relationship of a wife with her husband have little importance in their fashionable society. Her reaction to the elopement though it shocks Edmund is in keeping with what has gone before: ' it was the detection not the offence which she reprobated.'

Miss Linklater has presented an interesting view about Mary's opinions:

> And as to her comments on her brother's elopement with Maria, do they not show greater charity than the rigid condemnation of Edmund

and Fanny? Let them marry, she says,.... Life

> will become at least fairly tolerable for them, and the scandal will be forgiven or forgotten.[1]

However the above mentioned view does not appeal much. The sinners should be punished, so that the others may learn from their example.

Mary has a powerful interest in her human environment, not a shallow or false interest, but detailed, immediate, impatient of generalities. If it were not for her letter to Fanny concerning the probability of Bertram's death, which she confesses would make all the difference in her attitude to Edward, we should still delight in her gaiety and wit. But by this avowal, she has blundered badly, and it is now evident that Jane Austen is insistent on her downfall.

There are inconsistencies in what Mary says and does, and what is said of her. An animus against her is detectable.

It is perhaps unfair to apply to Miss Austen's characters the different standards of our own day, and we are to judge Mary Crawford as her creator meant her to be judged, we must allow Edmund that her comments on the elopement showed real badness of

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1. Linklater Thompson, op.cit., p.158

heart.

Mrs.Elton in Emma evokes laughter not only for her claim to superiority but also for her irrelevant speech. She is ' the charming Augusta Hawkins,' whom Mrs.Elton eventually married. She is a foolish, snobbish, and vulgar lady. Her maiden name, Augusta Hawkins is a suggestive blend of pretension and commonness, and she gives a full displa of both in Highbury society.

Mrs. Elton is a well dowered bride, ' the glory of Miss Hawkins', as Miss Austen puts it. She has her connection with £ 10,000 and belongs to a prosperous merchant family. She came from Bristol where her father had been a merchant. After the death of her parents she lived with her uncle, also of Bristol. She spent part of every winter in Bath, and soon became engaged to Mr.Elton. Her older sister Selina had married Mr.Suckling of Maple Grove, who kept two carriages. R.E.Hughes has noticed in the following what may be called her only yardstick: ' Her evaluation of all that goes on around her depends on what Selina would say'.[1] Mrs. Elton enters the novel at the point when she becomes a projection of Emma's **new** attitude as well as a type of the new social spirit. Before

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1.R.E.Hughes,'The education of Emma Woodhouse',Emma, edit. David Lodge, op.cit.,p.191

s' e had reached Highbury, people there talked of her elegance, accomplishments, and fortune. But she proves to be a figure of fun with her constant reference to Maple Grove, ' the brouche landau, her 'Caro sposo' and 'saffren robe! She always stresses upon her own importance and that of her family, with her everlasting talk of " my brother Mr.Suckling," and her conviction that all her family and acquaintances at Bristol are richer, superior, grander in every way to everybody at Highbury. Once Emma meets Mrs. Elton it does not take her long to arrive at an opinion of her worth. The duet between her and Emma is immediately inaugurated and the scene in which she returns Miss Woodhouse's wedding call is high comedy. Bent on making an impression she begins by comparing the house and the grounds of Hartfield with the seat of that newly rich brother in law Mr.John Suckling. She then proceeds to offer Emma introductions to her circle at Bath, to exaggerate her lowe for the entertainment afforded by music, to dwell on the responsibility of looking after a house for two at the vicarage- to Emma who is the owner of a big house with a train of servants. Everything she says including her smattering of Italian, is

intended to magnify her own importance and to put herself on an equal footing with a new acquaintance whom she privately acknowledges as her superior. Emma's immediate reaction on meeting her is: ' Insufferable woman! worse than I had supposed. Absolutely insufferable.'

Mrs.Elton presents the facade of the elegant woman, but is actually inelegant. She is characterised by an overlay of elegance that opulently exhibits her vulgarity. This is especially evident in her dress, speech, and manner. Her speech is characteristically larded with petty and foolish things about herself and her family. Her standards of judgment are formed by wealth. Her comments on Mrs. Weston speak of her mean and vulgar nature:

> 'Mrs. Weston seems an excellent creature-quite a first rate favourite with me already, I assure you-.... she was your governess I think.... Having understood as much I was rather astonished to find her so very lady like! But she is really quite the gentlewoman.'[1]

A kind of comparative symbolic relationship

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1. Emma, p.55

exists between Emma and Mrs. Elton. She is a vulgar caricature of Emma herself, and although Emma despises her, we recognise her own faults, carried to an extreme point in Mrs. Elton's personality. She is true companion of Emma in motive. Both want to dominate every situation. Emma is an unequalled queen of Highbury, Mrs.Elton too burst, in all the splendour of her newly married state, upon the quiet society of Highbury, eager to dazzle and subdue, to dominate and instruct. Emma's judgment on the Coles who are struggling to rise above the stigma of trade, is exactly duplicated by Mrs.Elton's description of a family who reside near her house: "very lately settled there, and encumbered with many low connections, but giving themselves immense airs, and expecting to be on footing with the old established families..." When Mrs. Elton tells Emma that at Bath ' A line from me would bring you a little host of acquaintance,' Emma appropriately recoils in indignation, although she herself supposes that Harriet must- be deriving unspeakable social advantages from her own company. Emma is angry at the silliness of Mrs. Elton's actually discovering that ' Mr.Knightley is a gentleman.' However, Emma herself is silly enough to tell him that his arriving at the Cole's in his own carriage' is coming as you should do,... like a

gentleman.'

Mrs. Elton is ' a vain woman extremely well satisfied with herself and thinking much of her own importance, that she meant to shine and be very superior, ' but with manners which had been formed in a bad school.'[1]

She is indeed Emma's Lucy Steele, a caricature who serves to show up the thin, delicate imperfections of the heroine herself. In ' Sense and Sensibility' Lucy Steele has the same relation to Elinor and tells her:...' as soon as I saw you I felt almost as if you were an old acquaintance.'[2] Now Mrs. Elton makes the same overtures of sisterly 'friendship' towards Emma. When the two of them are together, 'we' replaces'I'.

Jane Austen has been uncommonly thorough in working out the similarities between the two. Taken together, they are meant to tarnish slightly the Emma we thought we knew: ' that handsome, clever and young rich' lady of the first paragraph. The little but important difference which exists between these two characters is that

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1. Emma, p.71

2. Sense and Sensibility, p.25

Emma admits her mistakes and repents while Mrs. Elton does not. For example, after the argument over the date of the meeting at the Crown, she is proved wrong, but makes no attempt to apologise for rudely contradicting Emma. The undertone of coquettishness in Mrs.Elton's conversation gives a clue to her character. Vain, Silly and Self satisfied, she tries to force her services on other people. This is the motive behind her eagerness to defend herself whichleads her to assume (unasked) the 'duty' of protecting Jane Fairfax. The antipathy engendered in Emma Woodhouse by her affectation affectation and condescension made her turn to Jane, who is equally well bred and better educated but in the tragic position, as it seems, of being obliged to earn her own living. Mrs. Elton reveals an overriding officiousness in finding a post of governess for Jane. This solicitousness is impudent and unconsciously cruel. Nothing could be more amusing than the conversation at the Hartfield Dinner party. Not contented with plunging into the matter of Jane's correspondence, and offering most unwelcome assistance in fetching her letters from the Post Office, Mrs. Elton

continues to protest, that she is determined to find a desirable situation for her friend. It is in vain that Jane tries to parry her officious suggestions. Mrs. Elton will not desist, until the arrival of the men from the dining room turns her attention to them, and to the impression she has made on them by her bridal finery.

She also wishes to assume the role of Lady Patroness for the Donwell Abbey outing. She thought the servants there all 'extremely awkward and remiss' and her own housekeeper Wright very superior to Mrs. Hedges.

The supreme example of Jane Austen's ability to provide comedy through characterization and without any commentary, is Mrs. Elton's monologue, where in all her' apparatus of happiness' she picks strawberries at Donwell Abbey. Her long scattered speech reminds us of Miss Bates.

So far it is chiefly her vanity and ill breeding that have annoyed and amused us, but at the dance at the Crown, she and her husband make a very despicable show of malignity towards the unfortunate Harriet Smith, whose only offence has been to think too well of them.

Mrs. Elton is, in fact, the only representative of the kind of ø farcical character

who gives some of the most obvious pleasure in the other novels. She is employed like Lady Catherine as a character who excites no sympathy whatever and a good deal of laughter, but she resembles Mrs. Norris in the sense that like her she is comic as well as capable of inflicting pain. The significance therefore of Mrs. Elton's appearance in the novel lies not so much in what she shows of her own busy vulgarity-although that is entertaining enough, but in what she shows of Emma's. Jane Austen has used Mrs. Elton to show some unpleasant aspects of her heroine. Emma too seems vaguely aware that Mrs. Elton is showing her something about herself she would rather not know. Her presence in the novel serves as a massive persistent embarrassment to Emma, an embarrassment that seems saying in a self important voice:

> ' I am Mr. Elton's Emma, we do have so much in common! '

Mary Musgrove in Persuasion is a variant of Mrs. Bennet, both unreasonable and amusing, but more subtle, being capable of some logic and observation when it suits her. She is a typical Jane Austen Comic character-almost a caricature. The

family egotism of the Elliots is illustrated differently, but no less disagreeably, in her character. She is the youngest and only married daughter in Elliot's clan. Possessing all the exaggerated pride in rank that characterises her father, she has, yet, for want of a better opportunity, married into a country family without a title, and shows her pettiness by insisting on taking precedence of her mother in law, the wife of a simple esquire. Unable to free herself of the idea that she has made some substantial sacrifice by her marriage, Mary is rapidly developing into that most unlovely character, a woman with a grievance.

She was wretched not only in her imaginary sufferings but in the imaginary neglect of others towards these same sufferings. She is like Mr.Woodhouse in imagining herself ill all the time. But Mary concentrates entirely upon herself, and there, in contrast, with the tender, affectionate Mr.Woodhouse lies the whole difference. Her husband Charles Musgrove was a common place man. Devoted to sport he noses indifference towards Mary's concocted illness. Like Mr. Bennet in Pride and Prejudice, he arms himself against her peevishness by indifference or absence. He goes out for hunting although Mary told him how ill she was. The Elliot trait of cold

hearted selfishness is engraved in her, and she shifts from querulous self pity to pique- when she fails to get undue attention. Jane Austen elaborates this trait of her character thus:

> While well, and happy, and properly attended to, she had great good humour and excellent spirits, but any indisposition sunk her completely.[1]

She is amiable only when she is getting what she wants. When she is not, she is fretful, critical and bored, and makes things uncomfortable for others until she does get it. She is thoroughly lazy, and her children are rowdy, as might be expected from such a mother. Mrs. Musgrove(Mary's mother in law) complains to Anne against her spoilt children. She told that Mary is completely ignorant about the training of the children. Mary's version about her children is quite different. She informed Anne that her little boys, Charles and Walter, were beyond her control. She complained that her husband and mother in law have spoiled them:

> " I hate sending the children to the Great House, though their grand mamma is always wanting to see them,for she humours and indulges them to such a degree, and gives them so much trash and sweet things, that they are sure to come back sick and cross for the rest of the day.[1]

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1. Persuasion, p.260

From time immemorial mother in law and daughter in law have had differences, but considering these two characters one is sure to think that the mother in law was right, for it seems improbable that Mary was a good disciplinarian. She is also a very insensitive, and careless mother. In this novel we are told that Charles and Mary Musgrove in spite of occasional disagreements " passed for happy married couple." But it is not as happy easy going affair as of the Crofts and Harvilles. Mary's marriage appears as an uncertain and teasing affair. She is fretful when demands at home made it impossible for her to attend social events. Pretending unwell, she readily agrees for a dinner with Charles Musgrove, and leaves her ailing child with Anne. She is always afraid of missing something good, and is apt to pursue the company of handsome young men, such as Benwick and Wentworth. Anne bears patiently with her selfish and querulous hypochondriac nature and nurses gently little Charles, when his mother goes to enjoy the party.

Class consiousness is deep rooted in her nature. Like her father she is a woman in search of an acknowledged existence, in search of some exterior proof of his existence in the world.

She always behaved as if her rank as a baronet's daughter dispensed her from the duties of a gentle woman, took precedence of her mother in law Mrs. Musgrove, on every occasion. She made much difference between great houses and small houses, elder sons and younger sons, rectors and curates, herself and others.

She gives much importance to status and money. She has little energy to spare from her hypochondria, but what she has, she devotes to upholding her notions of consequence, small scattered echoe, of Sir Walter's grandiose false pride. Charles Musgrove has an aunt Mrs. Hayter whom he wishes to treat with becoming attention but who, from being of a somewhat inferior class in point of family and fashion, is studiously shunned by Mary. Once when he takes the opportunity of a walk with a large party on a fine day, to visit this despised relation, Mary pleads fatigue, and remains with the rest to await his return. She regards Hayters as very inferior and below her status. On the contrary, she insists foolishly to her husband that he must attend Bath's party, out of respect to her family. Her foolishness and pride know no bounds, when she creates a comic scene on seeing her cousin Elliot:

"Bless me! it must be our cousin; -it must be

> our Mr. Elliot, it must, indeed! .... How very extraordinary! In the same inn with us! Anne must not it be our Mr. Elliot; my father's next heir?"[1]

She would not consider Charles Hayter as a possible suitor for ~~Harriet~~ Henritta because she hated Hayters. She judges people according to their wealth and rank. Neither she nor her husband make a single reference to the personal qualities of Hayter. Character is not a matter of consideration for them. Marvin Mudrick has remarked about their discrimination of men:

> Neither ever convinces the other, and neither ever feels the need to convince: Mary has her ailments to turn to; Charles is too contemptuous of his wife's logic, and too shallow and easy, to require more than an occasional. "How you are talking nonsense, Mary."[2]

On a suggestion that Captain Wentworth will perhaps marry Henritta she expresses this opinion to Charles:

> Dear me! if he should rise to any very great honours! if he should ever be made a

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1.Persuasion, p.321
2.Mudrick Marvin, op.cit., p.233

> a Baronet!" Lady Wentworth" sounds very well. That would be a noble thing, indeed, for Henritta! she would take place of me then, and Henritta would not dislike that Sir Fredrick and Lady Wentworth![1]"

However she is frequently blunt and clumsy to Captain Wentworth, because she considers herself far superior to him. Her snobbery is of the most tasteless and vulgar kind, and she is too stupid to see that it does her discredit. When Elizabeth hands the invitation to the party to Wentworth, Mary remarks snobbishly:

> 'Only think of Elizabeth including everybody! I do not wonder Captain Wentworth is delighted! You see he cannot put the card out of his hand.[2]"

Anne's marriage to a wealthy Wentworth satisfied her Elliot pride, and she found compensation in the thought that one day she and Charles would inherit the Great House and its large estate. On the contrary Anne will have no Uppercross Hall before her no property and no

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1.Persuasion, p.293

2. Ibid, p.301

headship of a big family and reputed family.

She seems to think that she should have precedence over Mrs.Musgrove. She is prone to jealousy, querulous, critical of her mother in law's servants. She appears as a thorough fool in her treatment of her inlaws.

She tends to be hysterical in a crisis. At Lyme when Louisa met an accident she not only had hysterics but made her husband upset as well. G.B.Stern remarks ' Why no body thought of knocking Mary unconscious as well, remains a riddle.[1]

Like other comic characters of Jane Austen she utters and acts contradictory. She first criticises Mrs. Harvilla (who being occupied in nursing Louisa, has sent her children to Uppercross) for parting them from herself so long and later declares that she herself can visit Bath for a long time. She complains that Crofts have not improved as neighbours. But when they help her in conveying her letter to Anne, she exclaims that the neighbourhood " cannot spare such a pleasant family." But comparing her to her elder sister Elizabeth makes it almost certain

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1. Stern GB, op. cit., p.71

that she is not as selfish and vain as she knows. She is natural and so artless that she amuses where a more scheming selfishness would disgust. With Mary it becomes quite evident that Jane Austen's fools are a constant pleasure to the reader.

CHAPTER V

Creatures of Passion

Jane Austen as once she called herself is often described as a minature painter. Put she was more than that, she was essentially a moralist, who had a deep eye on the follies of men and women. Every novelist is, to some extent, a moralist, as he shows us the ways or mores of his characters and their society. She was not a preacher, or a reformer rather an observer of human follies, and misconduct. She has explored the hypocrisy and snobbery of different types of people in her novels. As it might be expected from such a novelist it was the study of human relationships that interested Miss Austen most. She may not have known all that the people of her world thought and fancied, but out of what

she perceived she knew exactly what was good and what bad, discriminated exactly the individual shade of goodness or badness, exactly reflected how it showed itself in a person's behaviour. For, while no novelist is more sympathetic to real values and sincere emotion, none also is so keen on detecting false currency or so relentless in exposing it. To elaborate various characters she has used the technique of comparative character delineation as Gilbert Ryle has pointed out in the following:

> She pin points the exact quality of character in which she is interested, and the exact degree of that quality, by matching it against the same quality in different degrees, against simulations of that quality, against deficiences of it, and against qualities which though different or brothers of cousins of that selected quality.[1]

The fastidious nature of Marianne is made to stand out against the sly, shallow, and controlled feelings of Lucy Steele. Jane Austen believed that every impulse must be submitted to the inspection of the judgment, and, if necessary, restrained.

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1. Ryle Gilbert, 'Jane Austen and the Moralists', Jane Austen, edit. R.C. Southam, op.cit., p.108

Lydia Bennet, Maria and Julia Bertram act on impulse. There is no restraint on their feelings. The novelist tells us that they can not be happy with their lovers, as they were only brought together by their uncontrolled desires. Their passions are stronger than their virtues. Jane Austen firmly believed that ever lasting happiness depends on virtue.

Human nature was not a mystery for Jane Austen. She knew the causes, the reasons for every action. Mary Crawford and her brother were ruined by early independence and bad domestic example set by their aunt and uncle the Admiral. Though Mary's guardians never make a part of the story, their influence hovers round these brothers and sisters. Darcy in Pride and Prejudice tells the reason of his overbearing nature:

> " As a child I was taught what was right but I was not taught to correct my temper. I was given good principles, but was left to follow them in pride and conceit."[1]

Some of the characters studied in this chapter act purely on impulse and uncontrolled

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1. Pride and Prejudice, p.204

passions. While the others are very calculating and to some extent mean in their behaviour.

The results of unalloyed sensibility are portrayed in Marianne's counterpart the young Eliza Williams, and the results of unalloyed sense are similarly presented through Elinor's counterpart Lucy Steele to whom Edward is actually engaged.

It is in the portraiture of Lucy Steele that Miss Austen attains her greatest success in Sense and Sensibility. She is a complete picture of a minx. Inspite of her 'little sharp eyes' she is good looking, and clever enough to make the most of her attractions; dressing smartly and attaching the affection of her acquaintances by pandering to their weaknesses. Lucy Steele is the younger sister of Anne Steele, is shrewd, pretty and in her early twenties. Lucy Steele and her elder sister Anne arrive at Barton Park at the invitation of Sir John Middleton who has discovered a cousinship with them. Though ignorant and not very literate, she becomes secretly engaged to young Edward Ferras, brother of Mrs. John Dashwood. At Barton Park, the sycophant Steele admired everything, especially the children. She is a great flatterer and spoils the pampered Middleton children, and flatters their mother's maternal egotism. She praised each

and everything of the lady:

> ... they were delighted with the house, and in raptures with the furniture, and they happened to be so doatingly fond of children that Lady Middleton's good opinion was engaged in their favour before they had been an hour at the park.[1]

Her fawning, flattering ways charm Fanny Dashwood as they have pleased Lady Middleton. From these flattering meetings, she gains the favour of her proposed sister in law. Elinor is slighted and Lucy Steele distinguished by the future mother in law Mrs. Ferras, before the latter learns of Lucy's secret engagement to Edward. So Elinor smiled:

> ... to see the graciousness of both mother and daughter toward the very person for Lucy was particularly distinguished-whom of all others, had they known as much as she did, they would have been most anxious to mortify....[2]

Poorer than the Dashwood sisters, Lucy's obsequiousness to Mrs. Ferras, Fanny Dashwood,

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1. Sense and Sensibility, p.119
2. Ibid, p.129

and Lady Middleton caters to their haughty pride that considers itself affronted by the independence of Elinor and Marianne. Her conversation betrays her lack of education. Robert Liddell has thus commented upon the vulgarity and bad language of both the sisters:

> Their bad grammar is unforgetable and (as their uncle was a tutorial establishment) unforgiveable. Both are toadies, and affect to be sentimental baby worshippers, in contradistinction to the satirical Dashwoods...[1]

Noticing that Sir John and his mother-in-law Mrs.Jennings enjoy teasing Elinor about Edward Ferrars, she assumes entire ignorance of such a suspicion, and, pretending to have full confidence in his fidelity, makes a confidante of her rival, of whom she takes dishonourable advantage by binding Elinor to secrecy. Although her motives are obvious in making Elinor her confidante, Elinor bitterly resents having to feign sympathy for a woman she considers crafty and altogether unworthy of Edward; she resolves to get the better of her own affection for him. Elinor knows that such a step is essential to the preservation of her own

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1.Liddell Robert, op.cit. p.28

peace of mind.

Though vulgar, and wrong in her calculation regarding her engagement to Edward, she should not be blamed for her disclosure to Elinor. No woman in her place, howsoever, gentle in her behaviour, tolerate her fiance making advancements towards the other woman.

Praising Lucy, Firkins observes:

> I am not sure but the best drawn character in the book is Lucy Steele.... Lucy Steele is single minded, courageous, and resolute.... She is capable of meanness, hypocrisy, and treachery. At the same time it is impossible to detect in Lucy the smallest trace of harlotry, of Bohemianism or of disorder.[1]

It was Edward's duty to tell Elinor about his misleading engagement with Lucy. He had some of Marianne's sensibility. He thought Lucy was pretty. He, however, clarifies his earlier appreciation in these words:

> "At least I thought so then, and I had seen so little of other women, that I would make no comparisons, and see no defects.[2]

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1. O.W.Firkins, op.cit. p.22

2. Sense and Sensibility, p.281

But by the time the novel begins he has already been disencharted, and could easily regain the confidence of Elinor in this respect.

Lucy's engagement to Edward may have been formed before she was old enough for calculation, and she has wit enough to make him continue to think her a well disposed, good hearted girl, and thoroughly attached to himself.

Lucy confides in Elinor because she can count on receiving every social allowance. She can taunt Elinor about Edward with an ingenuous air. Elinor wishing to show Lucy that she is unaffected by the news of Edward's engagement, deliberately and unwisely invites a repetition of the revelations that tear her inwardly- and which Lucy embellishes with feline delight. Seated side by side, she torments Elinor with her talk; by telling her that as she is a disinterested person she is making her confidante:

> " that your judgement might just have such weight with me. If you could be supposed to be biased in any respect by your own feelings, your opinion would not be worth having."[1]

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1. Sense and Sensibility, p.125

It is not only her rival that Lucy delights in stabbing with her words; her rival's sister is also the object of her spite. When Edward calls unexpectedly at Mrs. Jennings's house, while Lucy is there, and explains that he was prevented by a previous engagement from meeting the Miss Dashwoods, Marianne exclaims:

> " Engaged! But what... was that, when such friends were to be met"
> " Perhaps, Mrs. Marianne, cried Lucy, eager to take some revenge on her, " you think young men never stand upon engagements; if they have no mind to keep them little as well as great."[1]

She is very particular about money. Her utterances about the meagre income of Edward, and her false pretensions that " I have been always used to a very small income, and could struggle with any poverty for him" recall Isabella Thorpe of Northanger Abbey. Liker her, Lucy broke the engagement and married the wealthy brother of Edward.

A deep perusal of the characters of Lucy and Elinor would reveal a similarity

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[1] Sense and Sensibility, p 237

lurking between the two. Jane Austen comes down relentlessly on the similarities between these two. She makes clear that Lucy like Elinor is distinguished by a kind of 'Sense'. Right at the time of their arrival Jane Austen comments:

> Their manners were particularly civil, and Elinor soon allowed them credit for some kind of sense....[1]

And just as upon Elinor the whole task of telling lies, when politeness required it, always fell, so Lucy shows a certain fineness in doing just the same thing. Elinor is diplomatic in handling a situation, and can practice flattery to get what she wants, and so can Lucy. On one occasion to smooth away the offence made by Marianne against Lady Middleton, Elinor flatters her by praising her piano:

> " Marianne can never keep long from that instrument you know, ma'am, and I do not much wonder at it; for it is the very best toned piano forte I ever heard."[2]

Similarly Lucy is full of praise for Lady Middleton's funiture. Elinor sensibly

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1. Sense and Sensibility, p.120
2. Ibid, p.145

recommends to Edward that " a little humility may be convenient' in reconciling him with Mrs. Ferras so long as she holds the strings; and Lucy too perseveres in her own' humility of conduct towards Mrs. Ferras after she has married Edward's brother.

Mrs. Ferras treated her affably to show that Elinor was not accepted, but Lucy did not know that Edward's mother intended him for the wealthy Miss Morton. When Lucy's engagement became known, she was highly in disfavour. Edward's brother Robert tried to persuade Lucy to give up his brother, was gradually captivated and married her ' secretly proud of his conquest'. Lucy Steel 's transference of her patronage from Edward to Robert Ferras, and her elopment with him are too like what, we are told, had happened to Colonel Brandon some years ago. An incident like this, violent rather than dramatic, requires more elaboration than it receives to make it probable and acceptable. The charge of harlotry can not be levelled against Lucy in this respect. She never get the love and warmth from Edward. She knew that an old spinster with no wealth has no place in her age. She took advantage

of the opportunity and enticed Robert to marry her. She proves as successful with her mother in law as she had been with Robert and is soon established as a favourite.

Lydia Bennet in Pride and Prejudice is an outstanding example of guilt and shame. She is not an original creation. She resembles Miss Larolles in Cecilia and belongs to a type as common now as it was a hundred years ago. She is a robustly successful creation, a girl who, while not vicious, is only a pleasure loving animal devoid of mind and principle. She is, of course, the true daughter of Mrs. Bennet:

> Lydia was a stout, well grown girl of fifteen, with a fine complexion and good humoured countenance; a favourite with her mother, whose affection had brought her into public at an early age.[1]

Lydia is the most striking of the Bennet sisters after Elizabeth and Jane. She makes an impression earlier than either of the two.

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1. Pride and Prejudice, p.8

Mrs. Bennet praises her in these words before the ball:

> 'Lydia, my love, though you are the youngest, I dare say Mr. Bingley will dance with you at the next ball.'
> 'Oh! said Lydia stoutly ' I am not afraid, for though I am the youngest, I'm the tallest.'[1]

This over confidence in a girl who by the standards of her time ought to have been still in the school room reveals her lustful character. She has no sense of decency, responsibility, and no power of correct judgement, as she is urged by her youth, rather a little prematurely, to look for a partner in life, or to be united with some young man, who can sufficiently satisfy her bodily cravings. Sheila M. Smith sees her as:

> ...the bouncing dairy maid type with "good humour" her only asset, by which we are trusted to understand that she will rapidly grow blowsy.[2]

She shows herself to be a silly,

1.Pride and Prejudice, p.10
2.Smith M.Sheila, Stern G.B., p.27

unprincipled girl whose only interest in life is to attract men. She is a creature of impulse and instinct. The coming of militia regiment to Meryton has determined the course of her life as far ahead as she cares to look. Her sister Kitty is as foolish in her endeavours as she herself. They can think of nothing but dancing and flirtation. Lydia feels easily attracted by the stars and uniforms of the soldiers. She is thrilled by the sense of importance at hearing and repeating officer's gossip; the prospects of innumerable balls and dress parades in the future.

Jane and Elizabeth were as one in regretting their mother's lavish indulgence of Lydia, and its probable consequences. They did their best to rouse Mr. Bennet to a sense of responsibility in the matter. When the regiment is ordered to Brighton, Lydia's world seems ready to collapse. She exclaims:

" Good Heaven! What is to become of us!
What are we to do!
Her foolish mother shared all her grief.
" I am sure,"said she. I cried for two days.
I thought I should have broken my heart."

I am sure I will break mine. " said Lydia.[1]

But Lydia, at least is spared by receiving an invitation from her good friend, Mrs.Forestor to accompany the regiment to Brighton. Elizabeth tried to have a serious talk with her father. She tried to persuade him to forbid the mad scheme of Lydia's visit. Mr. Bennet for the sake of domestic peace replied that Lydia would never be easy till she had exposed herself in some public:

> "... and we can never expect her to do it with so little expense or inconvenience to her family as under the present circumstances.[2]

All his delusions and ignorance have a shattering close when Lydia elopes with an army officer George Wickham. Wickham is the most plausible and the most villainous of Jane Austen's anti heroines. Her elopement with Wickham typifies the marriage relationship wherein physical desire has outrun reason and good sense. She repeats her parent's folly in the second generation.

Her father and sisters fear that she has

1.Pride and Prejudice, p.23
2.Ibid, p.30

become corrupt and degenerate. Mrs. Bennet has not taught her daughters the importance or function of decorus behaviour. Lydia is often unguarded and often uncivil. Her tendency to ignore the rules of propriety without thinking anything much about them is the clue to her more serious decision to ignore the rules of morality in living with a man who has not married her. She thought that they would be married sooner or later, and it was not of much importance to her. She seeks only personal satisfaction. Morality and propriety have no ~~significance~~ sifnificance for her. On this occasion Darcy behaves heroically. He hastens to London, seeks out Lydia and Wickham, makes a provision for them and draws them to the altar. Darcy serves Elizabeth silently by removing the financial obstacles in the way of the marriage. The Lydia-Wickham marriage is the society's conventional rescue operation for the passionate runaways. Wickham is Richardson's Lovelace scaled down from the Heroic to the small time seducer. Lydia's youth and her animal spirits form her chief attraction, and her judgment is too immature to make moral decision. The novelist convicts Lydia of silliness, rather than of sin. Her neglect of such practical matters as Wickham's lack of

funds indicates ignorance and inexperience. One of Jane Austen's triumphs in Pride and Prejudice is her refusal to sentimentalise Lydia. She is characterised as a highly sexed, wholly immoral stupid girl. When she runs off with Wickham, nothing can lower her spirits or drive her to shame. She is not scared of the disapproval of the society, nor the horror and shame of her family. As her mother is neither horrified, nor ashamed, Lydia too does not, in the least, feel guilty after having run away with Wickham to London. She does not realise that without marrying a man according to certain religious rites, it is extremely objectionable in the eyes of society for a man and a woman to live together as partners in life. She has done what she wanted to do; and if her uncle or father or some one else must pay Wickham to persuade him to legalise the union, that is their worry, not hers. She is a feather-brained and totally irresponsible girl. No amount of breeding or 'art' would ever correct her nature. She is not definitely, but simply impenitent. She recognises no authority to which penitence or concealment is due. Her letters to Mrs. Forester brings out clearly her character:

> ' you will laugh when you know where I am gone, and I cannot help laughing myself at your

> surprise tomorrow morning, as soon as I am missed ....for there is but one man in the world I love, and he is an angel.'[1]

If no niece is valued by some, so much the better, if for no effort on her part, it gives her a social precedence and dignity, she will take these though she did not ask for them and could have lived without them. Everybody was disgusted and shocked but 'Lydia was Lydia still; unturned, unabashed wild, noisy, and fearless.'

Though physical lust is her main motive in this infamous episode, she also presumes that she has assumed the respectability of marriage:

> ' Oh, mamma, do the people here about know, I am married to-day? I was afraid, they might not, and we overtook William Goulding in his Curricle; so I was determined he should know it.'[2]

Lydia never repents, nor she nor her mother ever recognise that there is anything to repent.

Lydia Bennet plays an important part in the structure of the novel- her elopement, disasterous as it seems at the time to any hope that we might have entertained of Elizabeth's eventually

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1. Pride and Prejudice, p.99
2. Ibid, p.120

marrying Darcy, provides him with the means of winning Elizabeth's gratitude and, with it, her love. He realises that an act performed in Elizabeth's service would be worth performing for that reason alone, even at the cost of associating himself with Wickham and the least admirable member of her despised family. Lydia's careless chatter gives Elizabeth a hint that it was Darcy who searched for Lydia and Wickham, paid himmoney, and persuading him in uniting with Lydia. This sets in motion the reflecti ns that lead to Elizabeth's acce tance of Darcy's second proposal.

Lydia though thoughtless and foolish plays an important role in the story as far as Darcy-Elizabeth relationship is concerned.

Maria Bertram in Mansfield Park is a complex, disturbing character, 'guilty' in the eyes of the social world, in which she lives, yet she is a victim of the corrupt and mercenary values of her world, and the shortcomings of her upbringing. Jane Austen has portrayed her as an artificially polite and superficially amiable character in the grip of primitive passion.

She is shown as an active, popular, sophisticated girl, who is secretely confident of her own perfections. She combines with:

> beauty and brilliant acquirements, a manner naturally easy, and carefully formed to general activity and obligingness.[1]

She is thought to possess extra ordinary merit and is supposed to be the 'pride and delight of them all'. Behind this mask is hidden a proud and selfish figure. In manner and appearance the two sisters are quite perfect, but of the 'inner rectitude' which is nourished by humility they have not a grain.

Actually Maria and her sister Julia are victims of the false standards and values. Their father Sir Thomas is blinded and confused by the sense of his own importance. Although he believes that he is bringing up his children to serve God, he is really more bent upon fitting them to serve Mansfield Park, ' how to preserve in the mind of my daughters, the consciousness of what they are' is one of his main preoccupations. Naturally his children show character defects while they are still

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1.Mansfield Park, p.27

in the school room. They are the products of the same false pretension and false value which their father professes. In Marianne's case the problem of inadequate parents is compounded by the partiality of her governess, and the flattering indulgence of her aunt Norris. She is pampered and flattered by her aunt, and neglected by her indolent mother Lady Bertram. She considers her cousin Fanny, who lives with her permanently, as very inferior. Fanny's education has been less sophisticated than theirs. She dismisses her as 'prodigiously stupid', and is encouraged in this view by her aunt. No humility or sympathy for a poor cousin is evident in her behaviour. She will not inconvenience herself for Fanny's benefit, even for the benefit of her health. Their materialistic tendencies already developed, they 'could not but hold her cheap on finding that she had but two sashes'. Her presents to Fanny are as frequently, generously, and carelessly given as her contempt. She finds Fanny ignorant of the things that matter to her, and abandons her to play alone with her discarded toys. Though she does not treat her cousin abhorently, a sense of superiority always persists in her behaviour.

This sense is further nurtured by her aunt. She is overwhelmed and charmed by the smartness of Mary Crawford who visits Mansfield Park. She is willing to consider Mary Crawford as most allowably a sweet pretty girl, while they were (Maria and Julia) the finest young women in the country. The same attitude of mind leads Maria to accept Mr. Rushworth as husband.

At the age of twenty one, she has begun to think matrimony a duty. She contracts a common place and satisfactory engagement with Mr. Rushworth, a neighbouring squire of some wealth and position. Her 'sense' of duty to be engaged is rendered pleasant by the prospect of entering a family of greater substance than her own. Mr. Rushworth is a dull, rich, but not a disagreeable young man. It was now her evident duty to marry him if she could, and thereby secure the enjoyment of a large income than her father's and a house in town, which was now a "prime object." This idea is zealously forwarded by Mrs. Norris, and Sir Thomas, having been given wholly 'favourable reports', is truly happy in the prospect of an alliance so 'unquestionably advantageous". Advantage means large income and estate. The

engagement was based on materialistic terms , not upon love, respect and mutual harmony. Edmund who has judged the mental capacity of the suitor was the only member to be against this alliance besides Fanny.

The real drama begins when Sir Thomas is obliged to leave England, and two destroying angels Henry and **Merry** arrive. Henry Crawford turns upon the Miss Bertrams that full battery of charm which he automatically directs at any woman in his orbit. Nothing in their education has armed them against such a man. Henry proved " the most agreeable young man". Margaret Kennedy has aptly remarked:

> Any house maid at the Park, any game keeper's daughter, would have known better how to look after herself. But they, behaving that homage and admiration are their due, cannot imagine that any man could trifle with a Miss Bertram.[1]

Meanwhile Henry Crawford balanced between Maria and Julia Bertram, both of whom were half in love with him; for Maria's engagement to Mr. Rushworth gave her, she thought, a secure position for flirting with Henry. She tried to continue the flirtation and an advantageous

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1. Kennedy Margaret, op.cit, p.69

alliance. An expedition to Southerton court, Mr. Rushworth's place(ten miles from Mansfield Park) enhanced her desires to be with Henry. She cared not ine for her fiance, but only for the large estate of Southerton and her friend Henry. She was disappointed not to get a seat with Henry during the long drive. Henry makes her more gloomy by his hint of her approaching marriage. Mr. Rushworth, becomes the most isignificant figure in the company. Maria saunters with Henry and Rushworth in the garden. The lack of perception on the part of Rushworth (when he goes back to the house to take the key) gives them a chance to be together. Henry renews his hint of regret for her approaching marriage. She, after a moment's embarrasment speaks of his recent enjoyment of Julia's company on the box. Appeased by his ingenious excuse, she adapts her present physical situation to her maternal one. She expresses her feelings thus:

> " yes, certainly the sun shines and the park looks very cheerful. But unluckily t at iron gate, that ha-ha, gives me a feeling of restraint and hardship. I cannot get out, as the starling said."[1]

She sees herself as the caged bird in a

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1. Mansfield Park, p.89

sentimental journey. Her words reveal her internal struggle. Henry excites her more " And for the world you would not get out without the key and without Mr. Rushworth's authority and protection" pointing out how they might get out round the edge of the gate.

Despite Fanny's attempts to dissuade them, they enter the wood in this way, leaving Mr. Rushworth and Fanny. This incident is a fore--showing of their future elopement. Maria thinks that the rules of propriety that force her to treat a fiance with minimal consideration are highly restrictive.

Having proper means of employing one's talents and feelings is very important in this novel, Maria, like other inhabitants of the novel, does not find an opportunity for the outlet of her talents. Lacking an opportunity to employ her talents, fill up her time, and give her a stable sense of herself, she, like others, experiments with a variety of undesirable ways to exhaust her leisure. She wants to see new places and new people, to ' find consolation in fortune and consequence, hustle and the world'.

Eager for some positive direction, and warmed by Henry' a tentions, she finds a chance,

when Tom's friend Yates bursts upon the company with enthusiastic talk about his venture in amateur theatricals, the disposition of forces becomes inevitable. Tom, his sisters and all their guests decide to put on a play themselves, transferring the billiards room in a makeshift theatre. Edmund and Fanny are the only ones who are against it.

After much discussion of tragedy and comedy, it is decided to try Mrs. Inchbold's drama of sertiment, ' Lover's Vows'. The reasons as to why all the young Bertrams and Crawfords are eager to act in this play only is that they want to keep themselves busy and entertained. The most sinister motive behind the desire to act is that they want to fulfill their repressed desires. Each hopes to find at least temporary cure for the persistent boredom by playing himself mentally in the novel and interesting situation of a character in a drama. And in this respect the particular role which each chooses to play is a significant clue to the desires with which he is troubled. They have chosen the 'Lovers Vows' as it suits to their unfulfilled desires. The problem is that Maria and Julia both are in love with Henry. The choice of role is very significant

for both the sisters. Difficulties arise, however, about the allocation of the female parts, both the Bertram sisters desiring the role of Agatha, the tragic heroine of the play. Henry makes his preference for Maria clear, and offends Julia who leaves the play. Maria's insincere avowls of willingness to give up the role to her sister bring forth the compliments and support that she desires.

Fanny dips into the play and finds it hard to believe that they mean to perform such an improper piece.

The original name of the play as composed by Kotzebue, was not Lover's Vows, but 'Das Liebes Kud'. Mrs. Inchbald, working from a literal translation, softened down the cruder title besides changing the text in other respects to fit for the English stage. It is a play about a Baron, with his afflicted conscience; his wandering natural son, the wronged mother(whose 'situation' seemed to Fanny 'so unfit to be expressed by any woman of modesty'.) Amelia's language is as objectionable as Agatha's situation. She has to make love to Anhalt, her tutor, and a clergyman. Maria Bertram acts as Agatha- Frederick's seduced and deserted mother. Maria and Henry embrace

each other in many scenes.

Mrs. Inchbald, born of a plebean family, herself an actress, and influenced by the humanitarian views of her friend William Godwin would naturally maintain a more liberal attitude on such points than Miss Austen, the daughter of the rectory. In her opinion the fact that Agatha, however, repentent had once transgressed the social code, rendered the part unsuitable for representation by an unmarried girl.

This role has given Maria great opportunity for private rehearsals and public freedom with Crawford. She completely sinks her dignity by accepting and then doing the role of Agatha. It has given her the license and opportunity to speak, act, and feed the passion she is forbidden to express in the ordinary way. The worse aspect of all this was that the discord between the two sisters, Maria and Julia, set up by the shift of Henry Crawford's preference, first Julia to Maria, and now Maria to Julia, grew deeper as Maria fell more seriously in love with him. The unexpected return of her father Sir Thomas sweaps ~~every~~ the whole nefarious design. He returns before Maria's engagement is actually broken. He ended the theatricals by his autocratic decision. But

not so ended the agitations and expectations to which the rehearsals had given rise.

Maria wishes desperately for some intervention from Henry Crawford that will save her at the last from Rushworth marriage. She despises her forthcoming marriage to a man she despises. All the extent of the Rotherton estate could not blind Sir Thomas's judgment to the fact that Mr. Rushworth was a very heavy, stupid young man, with whom there was a risk that Maria, inspite of being a socially ambitious young woman, might never be able to settle down to any sort of conjugal felicity. He offers to release her from her engagement if she were repenting on further knowledge of Mr. Rushworth. But Maria did not wish to make any change. She was secretly trying to combine the infatuation for Henry Crawford- with the worldly prospects of a more advantageous, more definite alliance:

> She was in a state of mind to be glad that she had secured her fate beyond recall;... and retired in proud resolve...'[1]

She resolves not to let her behaviour

1.Mansfield Park, p.133

awaken further doubts. She must achieve independence and escape from the oppressive influence of her father and Mansfield Park. Henry Crawford, who has no intention of committing himself, slips off to Bath. She married Rushworth. The 'very proper wedding' as described by the author, is a ceremonial display of artificial feelings.

Jane Austen's irony is serious and effective. Maria might seem to have done right in making the proper spiritual and mental preparation for marriage, priority over non essentials such as carriages and new furniture, but the 'rest might wait' is an ominous phrase. It prophesies what, with such dangerous preparations as these, must happen when Maria finds herself freed at last from the restraints of Mansfield Park. She is at liberty in the fabulous world of London. The final catastrophe comes when Henry meets Maria again and elopes with her bringing her complete downfall. This, like the elopement of Lydia Bennet, is the violent event that Jane Austen relies upon to start the denouement. And yet we cannot help feeling that Maria is hardly done by. Even if from the desire for great wealth and position and under the influence of her worldly aunt she has

accepted a suitor she does not love, she quickly repents when she is seized by real passion, and if Henry had declared himself at that last rehearsal she would not have hesitated to face the scandal of a broken engagement. Meeting him again and still loving him, realising that nothing counts in comparison to his affection, she allows herself to be again deluded and flings away her position and good name for his sake.

Sir Thomas refuses to admit his unworthy child in his house as she:

> had destroyed her own character, and he would not try a vain attempt to restore what never could be restored, by affording his sanction to vice.[1]

Fanny's generous opinion in this case is that ' The greatest blessing to everyone of kindered with Mrs. Rushworth would be instant annihilation' a familial sentiment that might just strike a sympathetic chord in Mr.Collins. Sir Thomas takes seriously the kind of lofty and vicious advice Mr. Collins had offered to Mr. Bennet.

She is condemned as not only foolish and dishonourable, but as wholly vicious. She is

cast into the outer darkness to weep and gnash her teeth in company with Mrs. Norris, enduring whose society for life might alone be supposed excessive penance for a darker deed. Maria is a prey to her bad training and early independence. The responsibility for all that happened rests on the shoulders of Sir Thomas more than any other. He was more to blame than Lydia's father. There is a sharp difference between the behaviours of Sir Thomas and Mr. Bennet. The latter had always been irresponsible and careless about his children. Sir Thomas had allowed Maria's hopeless marriage to take place, and in so doing he had sacrificed the right to the expedient, and was governed by motive of selfishness and worldly wisdom.

Maria was completely ruined. Sir Thomas shifted the responsibility for her off his shoulders by dumping her with Mrs. Norris, and saving the neighbourhood from the great insult.

Julia Bertram is slightly sketched, than her sister. Like her sister Maria Bertram, she represents the respective conditions of,

and the discrepancy between rural and urban England of that period.

She is the younger daughter of Sir Thomas Bertram, and has no particular qualities except good looks like her sister. She was given a superficial education in accomplishments and factual knowledge. Indulged and flattered by their aunt Norris, both the sisters grow up thinking themselves ' the finest young women in the country'. Though they were considered religious, they had been instructed theoratically in their religion, but never required to bring it into daily practice.

Julia always acts upon the motives of vanity, and selfishness. Her sins have been prefigured, from the beginning of the novel, by instances of her defective education. Her mother did not pay the smallest attention. The family atmosphere leaves a great mark upon her personality, where people are not intimate with one another. They are hardly even familiar. There is no sympathy or affection between sisters and brothers. Between parents the case is hardly better, the father sits on dais, the mother lies on Sofa. Sir Thomas has handed over his daughter's education to

Mrs. Norris. As a result it is not surprising that with all their promising talents and early information, they should be entirely deficient in the less common acquirements of self knowledge, generosity, and humility. ' In every thing, but disposition, they were admirably taught'.[1]

Julia's education was entirely theoritical. She was unaware of the higher species of self command, and knowledge of her own heart. She tends to ignore the moral aspects of the life. To hear the rules of propriety are an entirely social phenomenon, a set of behaviour prescription, which define one's social position. The care that is taken to keep from her everything in the shape of affliction, prevents her best feelings from being exercised, and the praises bestowed on her accomplishments, raise her idea of her own consequences. It is elegance, rather than morality that really matters to her. Since her childhood she is distinguished for elegance, for accomplishments, her heart is engrossed by vanity with all its concomitant vices. She always feels a kind of complex towards her poor niece. She never was on friendly terms with her cousin, or with her sister. A feeling of superiority, and a tendency to taunt lurk in her conversation.

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1. Mansfield Park, p.33

Mrs. Norris pampers her and everything reminds her that she is certainly better gifted than her cousin. Under such guardians it is hardly surprising that the legitimate inheritors go wrong, since they have not been brought up to respect and maintain their heritage.

Drilled in selfishness and hypocrisy, both the sisters fall in love with Henry Crawford without perusing his true character. Maria's engagement made Julia feel ready to be admired by Mr. Crawford in less than a week. His attention to Maria showed Julia's lack of self command. The sisters become envious of each other, rather they became enemies.

Actually Julia was brought up in an atmosphere where self command and restraint were considered a duty, not an essential part of life. Her father's strict rules of propriety ~~was~~ were annoying restrictions on her freedom of action. The one reason why she and her sister were charmed by the Crawfords was that they (the Crawfords) lived by a standard of propriety that makes no pretence of reflecting an internal moral comm-itment. Their fashionable society sets little stress on the strict~~ness~~ rules of morality. The standard of propriety, to which Edmund and

Fanny adhere seems to be an earlier and more rural one-- one which has not been altered by recent social developments. Both the Bertram sisters abhored this conventional rural society of Mansfield. London and its fashions were the ideals for them. With the arrival of the fashionable Crawford, their long suppressed desires came to the fore, and both became the victims of hypocrisy.

To grasp the full meaning of Julia's character and the incidents which surround her, it is important to understand the world of the novel, and the significant difference between life at Mansfield Park and the London life. It was a period of great stability in England just about to give way to a time of unimagined changes. At that time most of the population were involved in rural and agricultural work; yet within another twenty years, the majority of Englishmen became urban dwellers involved with industry, and the great railway age began. Regency London, in particular, became a centre of fashion. On the other hand England in 1813 was still a land of country towns, the people engaged in agriculture work, far from the wars against Napoleon.

Jane Austen, being the daughter of a Tory parson, valued the old rural way of life, and she too was well aware of a new emerging attitude that was speculative, acquisitive, calculating and irreverent. The people of urbanized England were becoming foreign and haughty in their behaviour. Hypocrisy and artificiality, crept into their habits. Hence throughout Mansfield Park a tension between two standards is at issue. Influenced by those fashionable people, and bored by their own tension these inhabitants of Mansfield Park decide to enact a play and choose 'Lover's Vows'. This desire to act becomes a symptom of the diseased state of mind of nearly all the young people of Mansfield Park. Julia as well as her sister Maria are keen to play Agatha against Henry as Frederick.

Finally the role was given to Maria; jealousy caused Julia to refuse to participate in the play. She suffers from internal agony of frustration and humiliation. The qualities, that she is normally able to keep hidden, take the shape of a selfish and vain girl. Sir Thomas' neglect of principle has left Julia believing herself perfect and the girls having no idea of

carrying their obliging manners to the sacrifice of any real pleasure, for the sake of others. Sir Thomas' timely arrival accelerates the situation. When the Crawfords left, her bitter animosity towards Maria waned; when Maria married Rushworth, it ended, and she accompanied them to Brighton and London. Perhaps still more indicative of their **faulty** relationship is the fact that they can drift back into an apparent closeness based on their own selfishness as when Julia accompanies her sister to Brighton and London.

Certainly the pull of family duties is very weak in her, as she has not been trained in this respect, she does not come back to Mansfield, to help and nurse her brother Tom in his illness. She makes a half hearted offer to come, if 'wanted'. Want of moral training, and right judgment work upon her in the free society of London, and she elopes with Mr. Yates. Maria's guilt has induced her for this shame, as she knew that there would be more restrictions, barriers in her conventional home. Tony Tanner and some other critics describe Julia as better tempered, and more in control of her feelings. But as both the sisters have the

stigma of a shameful guilt, Julia is no better than her sister. If Henry would have induced her to elope in the same circumstances, she also would have committed adultery.

Isabella Thrope of Northanger Abbey is one of those females, not frequently met with in Jane Austen's novels, who combine an empty head and agreeable manners with a clear view of personal advantage.

Jane Austen is one of the few English novelists, who have successfully presented the psychological bent of mind of her different characters. Isabella Thrope exhibited as a foil to Catherine. As a minor character, she is a success in her category of characters. She is in a way a product of the literary burlesque. Jane Austen has beautifully contrasted the simple Catherin to the vain coquette Isabella in this novel. Both the girls come across each other at Bath, where Catherine went with her neighbour Mrs. Allen. Isabella makes Catherine her friend at Bath:

> They passed so rapidly through every gradition of increasing tenderness, that there was shortly no fresh proof of it to be given

to their friends or themselves.[1]

Catherine's formative experience is compounded of love and friendship. She meets Henry Tilney one day before she meets Isabella Thorpe, and Henry's absence accelerates the girls' mutual devotion. Friendship is certainly the finest balm for the pangs of disappointed love. Catherine, being naive and innocent does not realise Isabella's true nature. Isabella is a self centred girl in every motion of her being. She parades herself as a heroine. In her character, the author forcasts the supremacy of a type which has scarcely been recognised before but which has since played so dominant a part in fiction. She is a vigilant man hunter who conceals her predatory instincts behind gushing affection for the younger Catherine.

It is she, however, who first explicitly introduced the Gothic theme to Catherine. Catherine is too naive to perceive that her new friend is herself a fiction. Her character, her vocubulary and sentiments all emanating from the circulating library which she now introduces to

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1. Northanger Abbey, p.30

her friend. Catherine, dazzled, is quite willing to be in company of this paragon of beauty and sensibility. They talk about ' the Mysteries of Udolpha' and other desirably 'horrid' books:

> As a specimen of their very warm attachment, and of the delicacy, discretion, originality of thought, and literary taste which marked the reasonableness of that attachment.[1]

The following fragment from the Charlotte Smith's 'Catherine' depicts a clear similarity to the dialogue between Catherine and Isabella concerning " horrid books".

> " you have read Mrs. Smith's novels," I suppose" said Camilla to her companion...."
> "Oh yes," replied the other" and I am quite delighted with them...
> 'And which do you prefer of them?'
> "Oh!dear, I think there is no comparison between them..."
> "Many people think so, I know, but there does not appear so great a disproportion in their Merits to me,..."[2]

1.Northanger Abbey, p.45

2.Smith Charlotte, Catherine, (Source)Jane Austen Thompson C.Linklater, Op.cit.,75

Camilla in this fragment is a snobbish, self centred, creature of fashion. Isabella Thrope of Northanger Abbey is equipped with all these qualities, but mainly she is a vigilant man hunter who conceals her tact behind her hypocrisy. She has wit enough to have a very decided eye to the main chance, but her manoeuvres and intrigues are so obvious that only very simple people like James Morland and Catherine could be deceived by them. With her discussion of the horrid novels, it becomes evident that her knowledge of fiction is superficial. She is dependent on her friend Miss Andrews for all her information. Miss Andrews knows what is current and most horrid. Her mind in not held by novels, for it continually runs after young man, where as her friend's comments are characterised by extreme, if naive, interest

Being an attractive, shallow, insincere young woman of twenty one, she flattered herself that she was a connoisseur of dress and fashion. She was a coquette and aimed at affluence through marriage. Her expressions of friendship were always high flown. She talks about her friendship like a sentimental heroine:

" I cannot help being jealous, Catherine,

> when I see myself, slighted for strangers, I, who love you so excessively! When once my affections are placed, it is not in the power of any thing to change them..."[1]

Catherine does not suspect that her protestations of friendship are part of a campaign to capture her brother James Morland. Isabella is older to Catherine and her friendship is decidedly flattering to the younger girl. She considers every action of Isabella as appropriate, even her selfishness in trying to compel Catherine to forego an engagement with the Tilneys for the second time does not open her eyes. Isabella has appointed herself Catherine's mentor, and hopes to become her sister-in-law. She has privately cast Catherine for the role of confidante in a real life sentimental drama of which she intends to be the heroine. After the excursion in which Catherine refuses to participate, Isabella is full of coy importance, revealing the news of her engagement to James Morland. She

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1. Northanger Abbey, p.88

discusses her extremely placid and commonplace romance with James Morland in completely sentimental terms:

> " The very first moment I beheld him- my heart was irrecoverably gone...."[1]

She poses herself a sincere devoted lover to James, but in actuality shifts her affections to another. At the Upper Rooms, she announces that she will not dance, since James is away. But when Tilney's handsome elder brother Captain Frederick asks her to dance, she accepts the invitation. Catherin's belief in Isabella's sincerity is a little shaken when she sees Isabella take the floor with the dashing captain. She proves her selfishness and hypocrisy by falling into open self contradiction. Jane Austen has used the device in portraying other characters also. Mrs. Elton, in Emma, refuses and admits to show her importance or to hide her selfishness. O.W.Firkins has criticised Isabella's self contradictory character and contrasted it with that of Ibsen's Hialmar Ekdal in 'Wild Duck'.

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1. Northanger Abbey, p.51

> Hialmar, like Isabella, is a sentimental hypocrite, masking selfishness and heartlessness under professions of tenderness and magnanimity.....[1][2]

Firkins highlights Isabella's character and contrasts her with Hialmar:

> Like Isabella, Hialmar falls into open self contradiction. The beer which has plaintiveness has refused is accepted in the next second by the bread butter which his self respect has imperiously declined..[2]

Isabella is obsessed by the consciousness of her femininity and she can ot carry on a conversation with a young man for five minutes without inviting a compliment or initiating a flirtation. She poses her indifference to the attachment to be own. She tells Catherine about her meeting with Captain Hunt, and her warning that if he teased her about her friend Mill Andrews, she would not dance with him, " The men think us incapable of real friendship, you know, and I am determined to show them the difference.."- she says to Catherine.

1.Firkins O.W., p.62

2. Ibid, op.cit. p.63

It becomes quite clear that both John and Isabella have absolutely no feeling for others and no commitment to truth of any sort. They are also greedy and financially ambitious.

Isabella invents her own rules as she goes along, but in addition, she interprets the significance of other people's social behaviour in a totally idiosyncratic fashion.

Thus when Isabella sees a young man, with whom she and Catherine are unacquainted, looking at Catherine, her immediate conclusion is, " I am sure he is in love with you". When she is told about the temper of Tilneys, the day Catherine dined with them, Isabella reads their behaviour as symptomatic of "price, pride, unsufferable haughtiness and pride".

Isabella's exclaimations, her conversation, expose her ambitions and her social background. Jane Hardin sees a connection between a character's manners and moral condition in two of Jane Austen's novels.

> In Northanger Abbey, as in Pride and Prejudice a man's manners are seen as the social manifestations of his moral condition. Manners here(in Northanger Abbey) reveal rather than conceal(as is partially the case in Persuasion, for example), the reality of character....1

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1. Jane Hardin, op.cit.p.139

Evidently Isabella Thorpe, whose parents lived in a rather small way at Putney, had mistaken the extent of Mr. Morland's fortune. Besides that she was enticed by the wealth and smartness of Henry's brother Captain Tilney. When the financial arrangements and expectations are announced by James Morland's father and they mean genuine sacrifices on the part of the Morlands- the disappointment of Isabella and her mother is immediately clear. The air is filled with chagrin and anger in this masterly scene. Her unsincerity is so persistent that it colours all her talk and impels her to use the most extreme and extravagant expressions in expressing either her likes or dislikes. That she is so very plausible and so ready with reasons to excuse herself when she makes a slip, reveals her true nature and even Catherine has a momentary doubt about her not being what she appears to be. When Isabella hints that Mr. Morland has been less generous to his son than might be expected, Catherine cannot help feeling hurt. Isabella quickly attributes her disappointment to the unexpectedly long postponement of their marriage.

She assures her naive friend:

> " It is not the want of more money that makes me first just at present a little out of spirits; I hate money,..... The long, long, endless two years and a half that are to pass before your brother can hold the living.[1]

She makes the usual empty protestations of gratitude, but the very words reveal them as ungrateful, greedy and completely contemptible in their lack of appreciation for the kindness of the father.

It is not long after, of course, that further proof of Isabella's lack of feeling is provided by the news that she has taken up an excited flirtation with Captain Tilney. Henry and Eleanor learn from a stunned Catherine that Isabella has deserted her brother and is to marry their brother Frederick Tilney. The Tilneys hear the news of their brother's engagement with composure. Isabella's want of principle and Frederick's levity were known to them and they wer convinced that their father would not consent to a marriage without money.

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1. Northanger Abbey, p.121

The plot of Northanger Abbey finally rests upon love of money, greed and longing for social position.

Frederick Tilney had never been serious about Isabella knowing her to be the kind of girl he had to deal with. He was soon recalled to his regiment. Isabella wrote Catherine a letter full of protestations but such a 'strain of shallow artifice could not impose even upon Catherine'. Isabella realises that by encouraging Captain Tilney whom she had no intention of marrying her, she has forfeited the chance of a satisfactory establishment

The pursuit of a husband by a young lady of Jane Austen's era was a passive one. The girl had to wait to be chosen. Isabella makes this pursuit as active as she can physically by chasing good looking young man, and enticing them. It is true that her ways and means to achieve her goal are wrong, but in those days, a spinster was considered a sort of burden and a curse. Isabella, like Charlotte Lucas in Pride and Prejudice has to get a husband for herself. She is a beautiful but undowered young woman whose every hope of achieving status and respect in life depends on her

ability to make an a good marriage. Had she been honest in her active persuasion, she would have settled comfortably with James Morland.

In this way all these women forfeit their chances of happy marriage by their lust or greed or because of lack of proper education at their home.

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C O N C L U S I O N

To enter the world of Jane Austen is to visit a congenial set of friends. One loses his cares and completely absorbs in the company of her glittering characters. She tells no fairy tales which might send us back dazzled and reeling to our contacts with normal life, but diverts us from our preoccupations with another set of problems no less real than our own, yet making no personal demands upon us. In fact her attitude towards family problems has an overtone of reality even when we read her novels in the twentieth century.

What impresses the reader is the modernity in the outlook of her characters. Her women are of special importance for Indian women as they face the same problems for seeking a husband as Indian girls do. Mrs. Ferras in Sense and Sensibility seeks a well dowered girl for her son Edward and rejects the prudent but poor Elinor. Willoughby chooses a wealthy girl and ignores Marianne only because Marianne cannot satisfy his yearnings for wealth. Wickham marries Lydia only when he is assured of sufficient money from Darcy. In our country dowry plays a dominant part in marriage dealings even now. Beautiful, accomplished

but not rich girls are dismissed in comparison to wealthy girls. The craving to augment family wealth, power and prestige is a prime motive among the rich or well to do in Jane's novels.

Yet her novels do depict happy marriages too, and her concept of ideal marriage also appeals to Indian readers. Darcy with Elizabeth Bennet, Knightley with Emma and Wentworth with Anne are the symbols of ideal marriage. In India this view is shared by all. In the famous epic the Ramayana, Lord Rama embodies manly virtues, whereas Sita represents feminine accomplishments. The same is true for Lord Krishna and Radha. In India masculine women and effiminate men are often held up to ridicule.

Unlike Dickens Jane Austen also realises the psychological organism that underlies speech and manner. She takes her heroines through a course of psychological reformation. Marianne, Elizabeth, Fanny and Emma all pass through this psychological process. She did not just describe the fall of Maria Bertram, her lucid knife edged mind penetrated beneath the impressions which she received. Jane Austen discerned the cause, and discovered the principles of a character's conduct. She shows surface peculiarities always in relation to these essentials. This is the very soul of Jane Austen's art. The plots, the characters other than the heroine herself, and the

settings of the various scenes are constantly and relentlessly being put to use in order to further the heroine's psychological progress.

Jane Austen was born in 1775 and died in 1817. Between these dates many big events, like the American War of Independence and the loss of the American Colonies, the French Revolution, the rise and fall of Napoleon Buonaparte etc. took place. Only the most distant references to any of these is found in her novels. Their exclusion is obviously deliberate,because, otherwise in the normal case - they made a pretty heavy impact on the country at large even in those days of slow communications and scanty newspapers. Jane Austen herself was not ignorant of all these happenings. Though her interests were almost exclusively feminine and in her age politics was the domain of man only, she must have been well aware of all that was going on, if only through the family's naval associations. Yet Jane refused a royal invitation to write a novel on the fortunes of a German Royal family and she declined to allow her pages to be darkened by more than occasional shadows of French Wars and other major catastrophies. It is plain that any much greater intrusion of public events into the novels would have damaged quality. It would have overstrained their delicate fabric, and disturbed their graceful proportions.

Jane Austen ignores the more tiresome aspect of history, but her books are full of its more charming implications. We see men and women of a different age come alive with all their equipment of human interests, human moods, human fashions, and their artistic literary movements. One aspect that is conspicuous by its absence in Jane's novels is the description of the inner feelings of the characters. The emphasis is on the conflict between society and individual rather than on inner thinking of individual. There is no inner conflict in Fanny, as to why she is so rude to Mary Crawford, who is always so polite to her. Fanny is not always so inhumanly good, she does feel deeply hurt when Edmund lets Mary ride the pony reserved for her own use. She does not argue herself that this is Edward's right, as he is in love with Mary.

Only in her last novel 'Persuasion' we find the change. There is enough display of Anne's conflicts, and the mental torture through which she passes.

Charlotte Bronte dismisses Jane Austen with considerable disdain. She writes to W.S.Williams in much the same view:

> She (Jane Austen) does her business of delineating the surface of the lives of genteel English people curiosly well she ruffles her reader by nothing vehement, disturbs him by nothing profound. The passions are perfectly unknown to

> her... Her business is not half so much with the human heart as with the human eyes, mouth, hands a feet.... but what throbs fast and full, though hidden, what the blood rushes through, what is the unseen seat of life... this Miss Austen ignores.[1]

Some critics of Jane Austen have felt that she is far too circumscribed. David Daiches for example, quite misunderstands the fact when he remarks on the limited range of Jane Austen. He says that Jane Austen confines herself chiefly to the middle class of the society. According to him her most distinguished characters do not rise greatly above well bred gentlem and ladies.

Wordsworth on the other hand while praising the accuracy of her delineations, disapproves them for reasons that readers of the Preface to the Lyrical Ballad will find easy to comprehend.

No one can deny the fact that Jane Austen greatly valued fidelity to observed truth, and she believed in keeping the subject well within her range o observation. To conclude with Macaulay's remarks will do the novelist full justice:

> Shakespeare has had neither equal nor second. But among the writers who... have approached

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1. Clement King Shorter, The Brontes: Life and letters. London, 1908, I p.387

nearest to the manner of the great master, we ha no hesitation in placing Jane Austen, a woman of whom England is justly proud.[1]

Fielding and Richardson seem somehow to meet and blend in Jane Austen. She is like Richardson in her registration of the minutest details of mannerism and behaviour, and in her annotation of the scarce perceptible but significant and often decisive impulses of the heart. Her irony has the influence o Fielding. She is probably his nearest analogue in th whole range of novelists.

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